

# Shoulder to shoulder or face to face?

Canada's university – civil society collaborations on research and knowledge for international development

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February 2011

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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## Preface

We are pleased to share with you this Occasional Paper, researched and authored by Ms. Elena Chernikova, during her research internship in 2010 with IDRC's Special Initiatives Division (SID).

Under its 2010-2015 strategy, SID's Canadian Partnerships (CP) Program aims its work at: (a) promoting collaboration in research and knowledge sharing among Canadian institutions and with counterparts in developing countries; (b) increasing the contribution of Canadian collaborative research and knowledge to policy and practice of development actors; and (c) improving the capacity of Canadian institutions to learn from their experience in international development and share lessons with others.

Ms. Chernikova's paper attends to the first of CP's aforementioned outcome areas. It aims to document and assess recent experiences of collaboration between Canadian universities and civil society organizations in knowledge-related activities. Over the next few years, we expect more Program research award interns (formerly known as interns) to assess the record of Canadian experience in the two remaining outcome areas of interest to the Program.

Ms. Chernikova's paper has helped the Program gain a less anecdotal and more broad-based awareness of the extent, nature and types of knowledge-related collaborations between Canadian universities and civil society organizations on international development issues. It also affords a clearer understanding of benefits and challenges stemming from such collaborations, as perceived or experienced by each community. Key informants, qualified as "bridging experts", also drew on their own experience to suggest factors instrumental to making collaborations sustainable between elements of both communities.

Volunteer respondents to Ms. Chernikova's email surveys were not random samples from their respective populations. As in other similar surveys, they tend to self-select themselves according to certain characteristics. However, the response rate on the two email surveys was quite acceptable (24% and 40%) for this kind of survey.

One immediate application of Ms. Chernikova's research findings to CP programming has been that they were taken into account when we developed CP's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework in late January 2011.

Other examples of how this research may inform CP programming in the near future include:

1. A majority of respondents in each community (80% of universities and 66% of CSOs) do collaborate with the other community on knowledge-related activities on international development issues.
2. However, the range of collaborations in which universities and CSOs are one with another seem to vary greatly within each of the two communities (the paper identifies three categories).
3. Given (1) and (2), the baseline statement of CP as regards its outcome area on collaboration has been revised.
4. There is little evidence that those engaged in a broader range of collaborations do document these experiences, let alone sharing these with peers less involved with collaborations. Bridging platforms such as the Global Alliance on Community-Engaged Research (GACER) and the Groupe de recherche pour l'innovation, l'organisation et le transfert (GRIOT) remain exceptional and fledgling systems with limited results so far. This is a type of instance which CP may want to encourage in the future.
5. Still, there is growing demand on part of CSO staff to become more professional at what they do and universities are beginning to respond by creating special training programs for this new clientele (such as University of Montreal's certification program in international cooperation, Laval University's fledgling Master's program in management of international cooperation, and the upcoming Advocacy School in Ottawa).
6. Given (5), some types of collaboration which are still rare could be promoted by CP: recruitment of CSO experts by universities, visitorships for CSO experts at universities and CSO input into university training curriculums.
7. With few exceptions, those within either community who collaborate on research with the other community tend to entertain a much more diverse range of collaborations with that community than those which do not collaborate on research.
8. Therefore, CP could support interested universities with few collaborations with CSOs (and CSOs with few collaborations with universities) and this support could focus on research collaborations, as these may lead such organizations to broaden their collaborations with the other community over time.
9. The research report's table on challenges faced by one or the other community (and both), in their collaboration one with another, could be useful when CP reviews and develops grant requests for collaborative activities. Some challenges may be beyond CP's reach, but on others

CP may have more influence: cost-sharing, convergence of agenda, lack of exposure to management or need for additional professional expertise, and effective application of results.

Not only do we hope that you will enjoy reading this report and find it useful to your work, but we also welcome any comment you may wish to share with us on its methods and findings. We also would greatly appreciate learning about any innovative experience unaccounted for in this paper which you may find useful to bring to our attention.

Luc J.A. Mougeot, Ph.D., Senior Program Specialist, CP/SID

Ottawa, March 2011

## Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the essential guidance and personal involvement of my IDRC research mentor Dr. Luc Mougeot, as well as the gracious support and participation of the Canadian Partnerships team: Ann Weston, Loredana Marchetti, Claire Thompson, and Rossana Montoya. I am very grateful to other former and present IDRC colleagues, including Gisèle Morin-Labatut, David O'Brien, Peter Taylor, and Danièle St-Pierre, for their insight and interest in my research, as well as Diane Ryerson and Michelle Crawley and the cohort of fellow research awardees for their continuous support over the last year.

I am deeply grateful to the participants of my research for their time and willingness to give interviews and make essential contributions to this study; and for the great work they are doing internationally and locally in their communities. You are my inspiration and examples.

I thank Alfia Sorokina, my research assistant, who has been a source of ideas and a meticulous researcher in processing a great deal of data for this project.

I gratefully acknowledge the support of AUCC for administering the surveys for this study. Many thanks to IDRC's Fellowships and Awards team for funding this research internship, including my travel within Canada and the presentation of my research findings at a conference organised by the European Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption (ERSCP) and Environment Management for Sustainable Universities (EMSU) in the Netherlands in late 2010.

I am thankful to the attendees of my IDRC presentation for your many questions and insightful feedback. Several interviewees have provided written comments on a draft version of this paper. I am sincerely grateful for insights from Gisèle Morin-Labatut, Budd Hall, and Ken Lyotier.

Finally, I am grateful to my husband Tony and our little son for their patience, unconditional love, and strong support throughout this work.

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## Acronyms

AUCC	Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
CBRE	Community-Based Research and Evaluation
CCGHR	Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research
CCIC	Canadian Council for International Cooperation
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIFSRF	CIDA-IDRC Canadian International Food Security Research Fund
CP	Canadian Partnerships
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CURA	Community-University Research Alliance
EFA	Education For All
GACER	Global Alliance on Community-Engaged Research
GRIOT	Groupe de recherche pour l'innovation, l'organisation et le transfert
GUNI	Global University Network for Innovation
ICURA	International Community-University Research Alliance
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
ILO	International Liaison Officer
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OCBR	Office of Community-Based Research
PAD	Project Approval Document
SID	Special Initiatives Division
SSHRC	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

## Executive Summary

The body of literature on North-South partnerships for international development is growing rapidly. However, little has been written on cross-sector collaborative work in research and knowledge on international development in the North, particularly so in Canada. This study is a first attempt to systematize tacit knowledge on Canadian university-civil society collaboration for international development research. Various types of current collaborations are identified and documented; an understanding is developed of what factors enable such collaborations and of what benefits these bring to academics and practitioners involved. Major challenges for collaborative work of this kind are addressed, as are some ideas that are in place to sustain these relationships. Further, the report puts forward some recommendations to encourage and nurture effective collaboration between universities and civil society in Canada.

The research revealed that project databases available with individual organizations, be these civil society organizations (CSOs) or higher learning institutions, with their associations and with IDRC itself, are not designed to readily capture university-CSO research collaborations. This made data collection particularly laborious for this study. Still, with the help of NVivo software numerous examples of various types and subtypes of collaborations were identified from a variety of sources: Canada-wide surveys with organizations and personal interviews with professionals. Four of the many types of university-CSO collaborations identified are discussed in greater detail in the paper: collaboration on research projects, study placements, collaboration in training programs, and fellowships to practitioners by universities. The typology arrived at in this study is by no means complete and final, and further investigation should help to refine it.

Data collected suggest that relationships between Canadian universities and CSOs can be differentiated as interactions, collaborations or partnerships, depending on the reciprocity, intensity and formality of those relationships. While the vast majority may be ad-hoc, non-reciprocal, and not systematic, some tend to grow into collaborations, which are lengthier in time and are characterized by reciprocity and the anticipation of benefits which each side may bring to the other. Such collaborations may take place at different stages of a research project

cycle. Many respondents do enjoy the degree of flexibility afforded by such collaborations, as opposed to what is possible within more formalized partnerships. The latter are much less frequent and are most likely struck by larger institutions, building on a history of collaborative work and resources for conducting research.

Respondents from both university and civil society communities perceived collaborations between the two to bring many benefits, some shared and others specific to one community or the other. They are also fully aware of the many challenges posed by such collaborations, common and specific to each community. Effective collaborative work is often spearheaded by strong individuals who usually hold a high level of formal education and are committed to civil society. Their efforts often result in creating either structural or cognitive spaces for the co-construction of knowledge that requires collaboration, spaces which furthermore may be encouraged by Canadian funding agencies. In this study, these ‘bridging experts’ with a long history of collaboration and work in both the university and the CSO worlds were the key informants on factors that make collaborative work more engaged and sustainable. Unlike the literature on North-South partnerships would suggest, trust, reciprocity, and a long history of relationships – although important – are not the most critical ingredients of such collaborations in Canada. Instead, joint engagement in the initial stage of conceiving the idea for the research, a clear understanding and open discussion of each other’s goals, and the realization and acceptance of challenges to be addressed, seem all to be more decisive in making collaborative work effective.

In order to promote and sustain effective collaborations between universities and civil society for knowledge and research on international development issues, it is recommended to all actors involved, including funding agencies, that: a bottom-up and inclusive approach be used to design and implement research; lessons from collaborative work be documented and shared; funding arrangements be flexible enough to accommodate innovative collaborations.

## Introduction

This study was informed by the work of the Canadian Partnerships program within the Special Initiatives Division (SID) of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa, Canada. Unlike other programming units at IDRC, which primarily support international development research initiatives proposed and carried out by global-South organizations, the Canadian Partnerships (CP) Program has been working for 18 years with two major categories of Canadian actors - higher education institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs) - to support research and knowledge-oriented initiatives for international development.

In CP's experience over the years, a growing number of Canadian CSOs have been recognizing the value of research to support their international work. According to the 2008 SID Annual Report, "increasingly they are forming networks to address issues of common concern, combining forces to define and undertake the research required to inform the positions and policy recommendations to be put forward" (p.7). Many CSOs in Canada are linked to universities through collaborative research and learning initiatives. The Canadian Partnerships Strategy for 2010-2015 calls for "further support of capacity-building in research, knowledge building and evaluation methods ... in particular for some newer CSOs" (p.2). Over the course of their work, CP officers have come across a small number of collaborations for international development between Canadian universities and Canadian CSOs.

This paper is a first effort at documenting the range of such collaborations at work in Canada, as well as reviewing their effectiveness so far, with a view to hopefully assist future collaborative efforts.

The Macmillan Dictionary provides a basic definition of collaboration: "Collaboration is the process of working with someone to produce something". In their attempt to define research collaboration, S. Katz and B. Martin came to a conclusion that it has "a very 'fuzzy' or ill-defined border. Exactly where that border is drawn is a matter of social convention and is open to negotiation. Perceptions regarding the precise location of the 'boundary' of the collaboration may vary considerably across institutions, fields, sectors and countries as well as over time."

(Katz and Martin, 1997, p. 13) For this paper, I will use the word “collaboration” inclusively to identify a range of engagements between universities and civil society in Canada in international development research and knowledge activities. Apart from research, these activities include creating tools and methods, evaluation, reflection, developing a program/project together – everything with the focus of learning together and from each other.

Specifically the objectives for this research are:

- to identify and document the typology of civil society-university collaborations for knowledge-oriented activities on international development;
- to analyze examples of different collaborations, in terms of drivers, challenges and benefits to parties involved;
- to use selected examples to identify factors and conditions which have been responsible for making collaborations effective; and
- to suggest ways to encourage knowledge-oriented collaborations between Canadian academic institutions and CSOs which are addressing international development issues.

## I. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a growing body of literature on partnerships in international development. In their 2009 extensive in-depth review of the literature on partnerships and other closely related forms of collaboration, a team from the International Potato Centre in Peru identified many distinct literatures that deal with different perspectives on partnerships (Horton et al., 2009). Four broad bodies of literature were identified (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Types of literature reviewed by the International Potato Centre in Peru**



Source: Horton, Prain, and Thiele (2009, p. 8).

Among their key findings the authors discovered that studies of partnership tend to reflect the concepts, methods and priority issues of their authors’ home disciplines; however, a number of cross-cutting themes were identified. Apart from definitions and success factors, other aspects such as partnership dynamics, drivers, trust and mutuality, power and equity as well as evaluation of partnerships, were found to be recurring themes in the review of literature on partnerships (Horton et al., 2009. p. 77).



The major knowledge gap identified by the authors concerns “the lack of empirical studies and systematic evaluations of partnerships” (ibid., p. 94). At the level of specific partnerships, the lack of literature concerned with “the factors that influence the performance of different types of partnerships in different contexts” was identified (ibid., p. 96). This research attempts to contribute to the body of literature on partnerships and collaborations.

At IDRC M. Bradley found that much scholarly literature covers various challenges and trends in North-South collaborations for international development (Bradley, 2007). A review of studies and evaluations on North-South research collaborations points to some knowledge gaps, i.e., issues that would benefit from further research. Among those are: alternative and emerging structures of partnerships; institutions’ motivations for entering into partnerships; the challenge to design collaborative research agendas that advance mutual interest and address Southern needs and research priorities; and outputs and outcomes of North-South research partnerships (ibid., pp. 2-3). The typology of partnerships varies, featuring different interactions between principal actors, who are: individual researchers, research teams, research organizations, universities, think tanks, as well as civil society communities, NGOs, policy makers, international organizations, and donors (ibid., p. 1).

Interest in building and strengthening such partnerships continues to grow globally, both from an academic and a practitioner standpoint. Such partnerships have been a recurring theme in several recent international conferences.

Hosted collaboratively by the University of Denver Bologna Center for Civic Engagement and the University of Bologna, Italy, the 2006 international conference “The University and Civil Society: Autonomy and Responsibility” focused on the role of university in civil society. The conference was to “promote new relationships, deepen international scholarship, and initiate new collaborative programs”.<sup>1</sup> It raised awareness regarding the expanding societal needs which higher education can address, as well as the effectiveness of civil work, and situations where civic engagement needs to become a norm, not an exception (Stroud, 2006). The report by Andris Barblan “Towards 2010: the universities’ role in building the European civil society”

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<sup>1</sup>Retrieved February 23, 2010, from University of Denver [International Center for Civic Engagement](#)

presents a historical overview of the evolving European Higher Education Area and the pressure on universities to move from being responsive to also being responsible to the civil society (Barblan, 2006).

Another conference took place in June 2009 at the Leuven Institute for Ireland in Europe, Leuven, Belgium. Organized by the Interfaculty Committee Agraria (ICA) the conference on “Models for successful collaboration and partnerships of purpose between universities, industry, and NGOs – in education, research and innovation” attracted academic administrators and researchers from a wide range of countries and interests. It addressed various issues in both national and international partnerships, from collaboration on joint Master’s degree programs and student engagement in industry, to involvement in business and university-enterprise cooperation.<sup>2</sup>

The First International Development Conference in Damascus, Syria, in January 2010, on the “Emerging Role of Civil Society in Development” was organized by a non-governmental, non-profit organization: The Syria Trust for Development. International, regional and local development practitioners and theorists were invited to exchange ideas and experiences about development projects and successful interventions from around the world, as well as to raise awareness on development issues and related challenges that Syria and its region are facing.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, in early February 2010, Canada’s leading higher education organization, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), with support from the IDRC’s Canadian Partnerships Program, held an international Leaders' Symposium entitled “Cardinal Points: How North-South Partnerships Support Internationalization Strategies” in Ottawa, Canada. The two organizations have a longstanding partnership to examine “international research collaboration for development through research, communications and outreach activities”.<sup>4</sup> In their reading list for the symposium, AUCC gave a statement on the changing character of internationalization, where Canadian universities are re-considered as agents of change.<sup>5</sup> The

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<sup>2</sup> Retrieved February 25, 2010, from [Association for European Life Science Universities](#).

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved February 25, 2010, from [The Syria Trust for Development](#).

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved January 11, 2010 from [Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada](#).

<sup>5</sup> Retrieved January 10, 2010, from [AUCC](#)

symposium showed that Canadian universities have strategies in place for internationalization. These strategies show variable degrees of comprehensiveness, with decision-making on North-South partnerships for research tending to be decentralised. Research, that would capture the collective wisdom on why and how universities decide to develop (or not) narrowly defined partnerships into more encompassing ones over time, could help improve the ways in which they identify, manage and develop such partnerships.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, the past two decades have witnessed a shift in universities' role in order to benefit society. This has manifested itself in the signing of the Magna Charta Universitatum Europaeum in 1988<sup>7</sup> in Europe, the Wingspread Declaration on Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University in 1998, and the University Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education in 1999 in the U.S.<sup>8</sup>, as well as in the publication of a number of books on university-community partnerships and collaborations (Pezzoli, 2008). On September 23rd 2010, eight international networks<sup>9</sup> supporting community-university engagement across the world gathered to participate in the first Global Video Dialogue on Community-University Engagement. Facilitated by Canadian-based Global Alliance for Community-Engaged Research (GACER), the Dialogue resulted in the international "Call to Action on North-South Collaboration in Community-University Research and Engagement" (Hall, 2010).

Similarly, according to Uma Kothari, editor of the book "A Radical History of Development Studies. Individuals, institutions and ideologies", there has been a resurgence of the *non-governmental* within development studies, spurred by publications of books and articles since the late 1980s especially in the United States and the UK (Kothari, 2005, p. 203). Recently this tendency was noted also in Canada (Haslam et al., 2008). In her historical overview, Kothari

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<sup>6</sup> Communication by Dr. Luc Mougeot, Senior Program Specialist in IDRC Canadian Partnerships.

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved February 10, 2010, from [Bologna University](#)

<sup>8</sup> Retrieved February 10, 2010, from [Campus Compact](#), a national coalition of more than 1100 college and university presidents who are committed to fulfilling the civic purposes of higher education in U.S.

<sup>9</sup> These networks are both university-led and community-led: the Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinarios, Commonwealth Universities Extension and Engagement Network, Global Alliance on Community Engaged Research, Global Universities Network for Innovation, Living Knowledge Network, PASCAL International Observatory, Participatory Research in Asia, and the Talloires Network.

traces the emergence of the 'non-governmental' in development studies research and she analyses the reasons for this growing interest.

The outcome of the first academic conference on NGOs in the UK in 1992 was the volume "Making a Difference: NGOs and Development in a Changing World", edited by Mike Edwards and David Hume, which set the bases for a number of policy-like documents, placing NGOs under the spotlight in the field of international development research (ibid., pp. 204-205). However, as "hidden histories", the traces of "the non-governmental theme had always been marginally present within development studies research: but it had rarely if ever become explicit" (ibid., p. 209).

"The non-governmental" in this research represents civil society organizations. According to Dr. Lester Salamon, director of the Center for Civil Society Studies at Johns Hopkins University<sup>10</sup>, civil society is "a broad array of organizations that are essentially private, i.e., outside the institutional structures of government; that are not primarily commercial and do not exist primarily to distribute profits to their directors or "owners"; that are self-governing; and that people are free to join or support voluntarily" (Salamon et al., 2003, p. 3). This definition embraces faith-based as well as secular organizations.

Both the desire and the necessity for academics and civil society to collaborate take the extreme degree of convergence in a novel form of Civil Society University.<sup>11</sup> The idea emerged in 2005 at a Prime Timers conference and has been explored with cross-section organizations in UK and academics. It represents a vision for a new institution that connects the diversity of knowledge interests in the third sector, and empowers civil society actors by overcoming the fragmented nature of knowledge and providing connectivity both nationally and internationally (Albrow et al., 2006).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Retrieved January 20, 2010, from [The Center for Civil Society Studies](#).

<sup>11</sup> Retrieved January 20, 2010, from the [Civil Society University in UK](#).

<sup>12</sup> Similarly in Brazil government funding is becoming available for civil society movements to create their own universities. Thus, the Universidade Floriano Fernandez was created by the movement of the homeless. There is a long existing practice for social movements and communities in Brazil to seek advice and training from universities, e.g. the case of Parana University providing training in agro-ecology. (From Trip Report by L. Mougeot, 2009, p. 14)

In Canada, IDRC's support to collaborations between universities and civil society organizations on international development research has resulted in several initiatives. In order to support such collaborations, IDRC launched the Canadian Partnerships Program in 1992. According to the historical Memorandum "Canadian Collaboration" presented in 1996, "Canadian collaboration is no longer seen as anchored principally on a university-based researcher collaborator" (Smart, 1996, p. 5). The author suggested revisiting Canadian Partnerships Program's priorities, because it gives the Centre "a chance to enable some Canadian groups to do work on issues that are as much of concern to Canadians as to partners in the South, suggesting a shift from collaborative research on problems of the South to collaborative research on more global problems" (ibid., p. 7). Canadian Partnerships aimed at strengthening relationships with Canadian organizations. In order to support Canadian perspectives on international development that could complement IDRC's work, the Program started issuing small grants for academic and civil society collaborations.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and IDRC have been collaborating since 2007 to test an International Community-University Research Alliances (ICURAs) program between community organizations and academic institutions. This is to foster comparative research, training and the creation of new knowledge in areas of shared importance for the social, cultural or economic development of communities in Canada and in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>13</sup>

Three other initiatives at IDRC also indirectly support similar types of collaboration. They deal with inclusive research networks, under the International Research Initiative on Adaptation to Climate Change,<sup>14</sup> and with Centres of Excellence under The International Partnerships Initiative.<sup>15</sup> The new joint program CIDA-IDRC Canadian International Food Security Research Fund (CIFSRF) was launched in 2009 to fund a wide variety of applied research projects that aim to solve immediate and concrete food security challenges on the ground in the developing world. This program funds inclusive research partnerships between organizations in Canada

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<sup>13</sup> Retrieved February 10, 2010, from IDRC website at [www.idrc.ca/icura](http://www.idrc.ca/icura)

<sup>14</sup> Retrieved February 10, 2010, from IDRC website at [www.idrc.ca/iriacc](http://www.idrc.ca/iriacc)

<sup>15</sup> Retrieved February 23, 2010, from IDRC website at [www.idrc.ca/irci/ev-102730-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/irci/ev-102730-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)

and in the developing world.<sup>16</sup>

Canada has many and diverse organizations involved in international development research and North-South research partnerships. Every international development NGO and large community organization, as well as major universities, can demonstrate their connection one way or another with organizations or individual researchers from the global South. However, as noticed in the course of work of IDRC's Canadian Partnerships, there is little research available taking stock of knowledge-related collaborations between Canadian academics and Canadian practitioners on international development issues, and particularly so on Canadian universities' recent engagement with Canadian civil society organizations and vice-versa.

That being said, the research by Science, Technology and Civil Society – Civil Society Organisations, actors in the European system of research and innovation (STACS)<sup>17</sup> – points to Canada as the “country where participatory-type research enjoys the widest recognition and the strongest support from both the government and universities” (Gall et al., 13, 2009). This research compared SSHRC's CURA program with a smaller program in France, demonstrating the efficiency of the Canadian program and a history of community engagement with universities in Canada.

This history can also be traced to another research commissioned by SSHRC and executed by the Office of Community Based Research (OCBR) at the University of Victoria. It describes various arrangements by Canadian research councils to fund community-university research and knowledge mobilization partnerships (Hall et al., 2009). That research paper calls for strengthening arrangements for community-based research led by indigenous peoples to generate knowledge for action by their governments and civil society organizations. The authors also recommend that Canada ensures it is learning from and exchanging knowledge about community-university research and civic engagement with partners across the globe “to

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<sup>16</sup> Retrieved January 12, 2011, from IDRC website at [http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-148254-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-148254-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)

<sup>17</sup> The research project was funded by the EU 6th Research Framework Programme, as part of the Science in Society activities aimed at stimulating participation of CSOs in research activities.

strengthen the relevance of higher education to sustainable development through community engagement” (ibid, p. 48).

Professor Budd Hall, a creator of OCBR, calls for support of university-community research partnerships in the broad areas of Indigenous Studies. Given the emergence of very strong new currents of indigenous research in Canada it gives Canada a unique opportunity to build linkages and research partnerships with indigenous scholars and practitioners in other parts of the world including Latin America, Africa, and Oceania. The First Nations Council on Heritage Language and Culture in Canada is establishing international contacts and the attention is growing for these activities.<sup>18</sup>

The Canadian author who, with her team, consistently writes on collaborations and partnerships in the field of global health and social work is Dr. Gillian King, a professor at the University of Western Ontario. In her recent article on features and impacts of five community-university research partnerships in health and social services, Professor King notes that little is known about the characteristics of these partnerships, their ways of operating, and their outputs (King et al., 2009, p. 60). With the team of researchers, she describes three partnership models based on their findings: infrastructure-based; project-based; and participatory action-based models (ibid., p. 63). King proposes these models to guide comprehensive evaluations of partnerships. Her analysis of relationships is based on the frequency of interactions within partnerships, something which is challenging to capture. In conclusion, King calls for more research on a greater range of characteristics and models of community-university research partnerships, in order to understand the effects of particular methods of operation and partnership structures on their outcomes and impacts on the community.

The concerns raised in the literature over the engagement of the university with the community are centered around a “non-reciprocal, colonial relationship in which the former has tended to appropriate material and intellectual resources from the latter” (Kassam and Tetley, 2003, p. 156). The authors criticize the traditional paradigm of exploitative and asymmetrical relationships, driven solely by institutional criteria used to measure success. They

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<sup>18</sup> B. Hall, L. Williams, personal communication, February 3, 2011

notice that universities' interest in studying serious problems in communities is often motivated primarily by their desire to secure grants and produce academic publications. Instances where communities are involved in the research process actually respond to requirements on part of granting agencies themselves and therefore have been rather marginal (ibid., p. 157). Thus, universities often appear as dominating institutions, unable to recognize the need of working closely with civil society to genuinely serve its interests.

The 2008 workshop "Strengthening the Contribution of Higher Education and NGOs in Education for All (EFA)" argued that "NGOs use urgent intervention while universities favour longer-term projects."<sup>19</sup> (Working Group Report, 2008, p. 2) It also confirmed that NGOs work closely with local institutions, whereas universities privilege larger audiences. The workshop drew out the strategies for building stronger partnerships, where each side has its role in order to meet the expectations of the other partners. Thus higher education institutions expect NGOs to have a monitoring role and to bring forth local needs to universities. Universities in turn are expected to provide support in conceptualization, evaluation, forum for debate, publications and colloquiums (ibid., p. 3).

Overall, the literature suggests that there are expectations from modern universities to revisit their habitual ways. Traditional ways of transmitting and disseminating knowledge, through vertical and horizontal discourses (Bernstein, 1999),<sup>20</sup> are now expanding into complex knowledge networks — often transcending not only disciplinary, but national, geographic, cultural and institutional boundaries. Higher education worldwide is therefore undergoing a profound transformation. Multi-stakeholder initiatives using virtual learning platforms have been emerging to create and share new knowledge on development issues of common interest: over the past four years the Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinarios (CEBEM) has co-developed and offered, in collaboration with several Canadian and Latin American universities, CSOs and networks, a series of online courses for professionals from different sectors in Canada and Latin America, as well as a portal for information sharing, electronic fora, and general

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<sup>19</sup> Retrieved February 13, 2010, from [The International Federation of University Women](#)

<sup>20</sup> In his essay, Bernstein refers to institutionalized specialized organized knowledge as vertical discourse and everyday local knowledge as horizontal discourse.



collaboration.<sup>21</sup> Universities are under pressure to create and distribute new types of knowledge in order to play “a proactive and committed role in the transformation and positive change of societies” (Global University Network for Innovation [GUNI], 2009).

Striving to meet the demands of rapidly changing labour markets and to keep pace with technologies and innovations, Canadian universities are also challenged to include and operate with other types of knowledge, beyond the one generated by academia, in order to be relevant to society. They are re-emphasizing community involvement, and are experimenting with participatory and action research.

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<sup>21</sup> IDRC project 105119 “North-South Knowledge Partnerships: Promoting the Canada-Latin America Connections”.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

This chapter discusses the collection and organization of various types of data, as well as the steps followed to analyze current and recent knowledge collaborations for international development between Canadian universities and Canadian CSOs. It also addresses the researcher's bias and the dissemination of results.

Despite a large volume of literature on partnerships between universities and communities, universities and NGOs, and North-South partnerships, the collaborations that are the focus of this study do not appear to be well documented. As this research is informed by the voices of different stakeholders, it is participatory in its nature. It emerged from a number of official consultations, formal interviews and informal ad hoc conversations in a variety of settings. The methodology for this research has evolved, based on the information collected and the responses from participants. Due to the fact that few sources on Canadian collaborations were found, I used a grounded-theory approach, where data collection through a variety of methods became the first stage of the research. However, I also relied on the corporate memory of the CP team at IDRC, whose long-term experience in this field suggested possible modalities of collaborations and helped to identify the methodology for the search of existing collaborations in Canada.

The chapter is organised in three sections: data sources used to identify current/recent collaborations (section 2.1), field trips for interview-based data collection on specific collaborations (section 2.2), and analysis of data on these collaborations (section 2.3).

### **2.1. In search of collaborations**

The first step in the methodology was the search for current or recent collaborations for international development research and knowledge-oriented activities in Canada. Figure 2 presents the data sources used for this research.

**Figure 2. The sources used to collect information for the research**

IDRC Canadian Partnerships sources			
Small Grants database (526 grants)	Corporate memory documented (CP documents reviewed)	Corporate knowledge (5 interviews)	
Other IDRC sources			
IDRC database (226 projects reviewed)	Program Officers (21 survey answers and 3 interviews)	IDRC knowledge (6 interviews)	
Sources outside IDRC (survey and follow-up interviews)			
Survey of universities (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada 98 surveys)		Survey of CSOs (Canadian Council for International Co-operation 87 surveys)	
Field Trips			
West Coast (Victoria, Nanaimo, Vancouver 13 interviews)	Maritimes (Halifax, Antigonish 14 interviews)	Montréal (9 interviews)	Ottawa-Gatineau area (9 interviews)
The phone interviews with others resulting from the —snowball approach (16 interviews)			

### 2.1.1. Canadian Partnerships sources

As the CP Program issues grants to both Canadian universities and Canadian civil society organizations, it made sense to start the search for collaborations here. I decided to look at the projects funded by CP during the last five years (2005-2010). Over that period, less than 20% of the projects are listed as separate individual projects in the Canadian Partnerships portfolio: the majority are small grants.

#### *Small Grants*

Because the search engine IDRIS+ does not show the small grants individually, but rather within envelopes titled as “Global and Emerging Issues Small Grants” and “Global Citizenship Small Grants” (also as “Academic and Civil Society Partnerships” in 2005-2006), it was not feasible to work electronically. I therefore reviewed six annual reports, starting from fiscal year 2004-2005 and ending with 2009-2010. The reports contained short abstracts for 526 small grants, describing the projects supported. The majority of the small grants supported meetings, conferences, workshops, and the participation of individuals in the workshops, with travel usually going from the South to the North. I did not exclude these projects, described by CP as knowledge-related, from this research as they could be part of, or could lead to, larger collaborations.

Some abstracts did not give enough information for one to ascertain any actual collaboration between Canadian universities and Canadian CSOs. In such cases, I turned to IDRC archives and read final reports in the physical archival folders. The review of the first seven archival folders proved that the process was extremely time-consuming and not justified by the time limitations of the project. I decided to consider small grants projects based on the information in the abstracts according to my assumption that collaborations of interest might happen there. Based on this information, the types of collaborations supported were identified.

### *Corporate Memory (documented)*

Canadian Partnerships' corporate memory is documented and stored in the shared space on a Y drive as well as in the Annual Reports, Project Approval Documents, and strategy documents. This information, together with the corporate knowledge of the team members, appeared to be the most resourceful for my search.

Since 1994 the Canadian Partnerships Program has aimed to enhance partnerships with a wide range of Canadian organizations and to support Canadian research, information management and other knowledge-related initiatives. These projects have aimed to hone North-South collaborative research skills, infuse Southern perspectives in Canadian approaches to global issues, and shed light on the changing nature of global-local relations. Collaborations across institutional types, areas of knowledge and geographic boundaries have been given particular consideration. (PAD 105695 2009-2010)

The review of the corporate documents shows that for at least the last six years the Canadian Partnerships team has been paying attention to the space for research collaborations between Canadian universities and civil society in Canada on international development. In 2005-2006 the Program approved the *Academics and Civil Society Partnerships* small grants project (SGP), aimed specifically at fostering closer collaboration between Canadian universities and CSOs. This step yielded fifteen collaborative projects over two years, featuring some interesting partnerships, two of which have yielded a proposal for a larger grant. In some cases,

proponents were encouraged to identify a partner organization; in others, proposals came with an established working relationship. We noted also the increasing number of proposals submitted to the Program by formal and informal entities, such as coalitions and networks, to address issues of common concern; some of these entities include academics (less often academic institutions). Examples of such entities include The Halifax Initiative, Mining Watch Canada and the Table de Concertation sur la Région des Grand Lacs. (PAD 105695 2009-2010)

The Canadian Partnerships team hoped that, by introducing this SGP, the incentive would be given for Canadian universities and CSOs to integrate international development questions in their research. The team also hoped that organizations would benefit from connections between them, that small grants would become an innovative partnership mechanism expressing the Center's strategic vision.

The SGP would also increase the number of successful Canadian civil society-academic research partnerships in support of sustainable development. In so doing, the CP Program also hoped to raise the profile of this form of collaboration as a valid, methodologically sound way of addressing development and global issues, and as a practical way for CSOs to call upon the research skills of the academic community to deal with issues that require research for which they might not have in-house expertise.

Academic researchers in turn would benefit from the partnership with CSOs by better contextualizing their work and enhancing the relevance and usefulness of the research in supporting international development efforts. The aspiration was that new knowledge and perspectives would be offered on social, economic and environmental issues of global interest and, occasionally, that truly innovative thinking might be revealed. (PAD 105695 2009-2010)

### *Corporate Knowledge*

Close interaction with the Canadian Partnerships team provided access to knowledge about past projects supported by the small grants. Much information about a considerable number of projects was gathered through consultations with Luc Mougeot, informal discussions with CP Program Management Officer Claire Thompson, and an interview with former Senior Program

Specialist Gisèle Morin-Labatut. Later, a brainstorming session with SID Director Ann Weston and Senior Program Specialist Loredana Marchetti also contributed to some methodological aspects of this research.

Luc Mougeot helped to identify examples of projects to be researched and the key people to be interviewed on the subject. Moreover, based on his rich knowledge of projects, he outlined sites in Canada, outside the Ottawa-Gatineau area, to be visited for further investigation based on the focus of the research. Field trips were planned to the West coast (Victoria and Vancouver); to Montréal; and to the East Coast (Halifax and Antigonish). He also advised contacting a number of people he worked with, both academics and representatives of civil society, to ask them about the collaborations they have been involved in or others which they may be aware of. These people were then contacted by email, phone or in person where possible.

Claire Thompson shared her knowledge on the projects of interest. She also provided the contact information of people involved in university-community collaborations. These contacts were added to the list of interviewees.

In her 1.5-hour interview, Gisèle Morin-Labatut talked about her interest in this subject matter. Before her retirement in 2009, she archived some notes on CP work with universities and with CSOs, which were helpful for understanding the background for this research. These notes are not dated or officially titled; however, they were used here and cited as notes. Gisèle Morin-Labatut confirmed the majority of the projects that Luc Mougeot and Claire Thompson had highlighted and gave more contacts and insights (added to the list of interviewees).

The search for the projects within the CP programming unit was thus exhausted. The next step in collecting information was the IDRC general database. Thus the idea of a snowball approach to collecting data for this research emerged.

This exercise has shown that there are limitations in the project search. The library project database does not allow the abstracts of small grants to be viewed. The Livelink database does not accommodate searching for project number with component. Given how project abstracts

are written, there is no way to tell if collaboration with other actors happened in the project. Sometimes, it may have happened, but that is not clear from the description. In other instances, collaboration is mentioned briefly in the description, but in fact it was not significant and did not happen at all. Finally, 90% of the projects found in the library project database had already been mentioned by the CP team members. Thus, corporate memory proved to be the most reliable source in the project search.

### **2.1.2. IDRC projects**

There are multiple projects receiving support from IDRC divisions and programming units other than SID and Canadian Partnerships. Although finding particular collaborations between Canadians in the broader Centre projects was thought unlikely, because the IDRC mandate is directed to supporting international development initiatives in the global South, a comprehensive search was nevertheless carried out.

#### ***IDRC Database***

With the help of Catherine Shearer, Grant Information Manager, I ran a search in the IDRC awards project database CENTRA. After discussion, we set as the criteria of my search: 1) the period 2005 to 2010; and 2) both Canadian universities and Canadian NGOs as grant recipients. This search produced a list of 26 projects. Twenty-two of those were envelope projects from SID and the rest did not demonstrate connection with CSOs in Canada. I ran another search for projects where a Canadian university was a recipient of a grant. This resulted in over 200 projects. Reviewing the abstracts of the projects in this list revealed the same problem as with Canadian Partnerships projects, where collaborative work was not captured. Nevertheless, all projects on the list were reviewed, the full abstracts were accessed through the Livelink system, and more detailed descriptions (where necessary) were found in the archived project documentation. Few new projects were identified.

#### ***Program Management Officers***

At the early stage of the project, I sent out the letter to the IDRC Program Officers (Survey 1),

explaining the nature of our research and what kinds of collaborations we were looking for. There were 21 answers to the 32 letters sent; five of the replies suggested some projects. As a result, three potential collaborations were identified. However, these had already turned up in the searches. I spoke to the three program management officers to clarify the goals of the project and they admitted that in their cases the collaborations happened with the civil society in the global South, not in Canada.

### *IDRC Knowledge*

During these in-house search efforts, I met and had informal interviews with the IDRC research specialists from three different divisions. I was referred to these people by either Canadian Partnerships team members or other Program Officers.

Danièle St-Pierre, then Director of the Donor Partnership Division, was interested in the nature of partnerships and envisions studying partnerships as a field. She provided her insights on the definition of collaborations and their difference from partnerships. She also shared the information about documents published on partnerships by their division.

David O'Brien, the Senior Program Officer of Innovation, Policy and Science, shared information on ICURAs (International Community-University Research Alliances) featuring a long-standing examples of collaboration between Canadian universities and CSOs. There were four active ICURAs in 2010 and the leaders of two of them were interviewed later for this research.

Peter Taylor, the Senior Program Specialist with the Think Tank Initiative, is interested in the role of education systems and institutions in participatory research for social change, in capacity development in international contexts, and the co-creation of knowledge. He shared his knowledge on European research in this field and gave his insights into this research project as well as some printed references on the subject. He also happens to have long-time connections with some of the key informants identified for this research.

Collection of data within IDRC revealed the drawbacks of the electronic system when it comes to the search for collaborations. These are not obvious in the project descriptions. Knowledge



and information move faster through networking and interaction with people. Only seven additional projects were identified outside the CP. However, projects containing research collaborations between Canadian universities and civil society in Canada may simply have been overlooked, due to current limitations of corporate project record systems.

### **2.1.3. Projects outside IDRC**

Among core partners of Canadian Partnerships, there are the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), and the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC). These two organizations were suggested by the CP team as central to the Canadian academic community and to Canadian civil society working in international development, respectively.

A brainstorming session with the Canadian Partnerships team members yielded the suggestion to send out the survey to the AUCC and CCIC members, and thus to find out about projects of interest beyond IDRC support.

#### ***Quick Survey (Survey 2)***

After a meeting with AUCC program officer Rachel Lindsey, I discovered that there had been no known previous requests to AUCC by any organization for them to provide information on collaborations by Canadian universities with Canadian civil society on international issues. However, AUCC was definitely interested in this project.

Internationalization of research is one field of activity of Canadian universities of particular interest to AUCC. And so is the incorporation of social responsibility of universities in their daily activities. At the intersection of these two interests, this research was viewed by AUCC as potentially lending useful information to the organization.

AUCC offered to send the survey to International Liaison Officers (ILOs) on AUCC's contact lists. The conditions were that the survey have no more than three questions and be sent out as an attachment to a bilingual letter, as this is the habitual way AUCC works with ILOs. (Survey 2)

After being translated professionally, the Quick Survey was sent to 98 ILOs at 94 Canadian

universities. Some institutions have two ILOs, as in the case of Memorial University, whose Marine Institute operates as a separate entity.

The survey asked whether or not the university had any collaboration with Canadian CSOs for international development activities; what type of collaborations they were; and what the outcomes (benefits, challenges) of the collaborations had been so far. The results of the AUCC survey underwent quantitative analysis to reveal the typology of collaborations experienced, and the variety and frequency of learning outcomes mentioned.

A similar survey was conducted with CSOs through the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC). Major budget cuts were faced in 2010 by Canadian CSOs working internationally; these have been re-defining their ways as non-profit organizations and that has put a lot of stress on CSO personnel. The contact for CCIC was Esperanza Moreno, the Deputy Director. In her informal interview, she mentioned that she could name very few CSOs that work with universities on the institutional level (these names were the same as those suggested by Luc Mougeot and the other team members). Esperanza identified two people within her organization who deal with research activities: Brian Tomlinson and Gauri Sreenivasan (names suggested previously by Canadian Partnerships), as well as Molly Kane, deputy director of the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC group), with 13 years of experience as a director of the Canadian international social justice organization Inter Pares and experience in teaching and researching at Queen's University.

Meanwhile, the invitation to participate in the survey was posted in the July 2010 CCIC electronic bulletin, Flash. After there was no answer received from CSOs, personalized e-mails were sent out to all CCIC members (with the exception of those who had already been interviewed).

The limitations of this survey are defined by the operating ways of institutions. The system of higher education in Canada is decentralized and international development research at the universities is not always captured and easily available. In order to remedy this problem, a few universities as of late have been introducing surveys of faculty, new databases and software to

capture the size and range of disciplinary and geographic expertise on campus for international activities<sup>22</sup>. Perhaps the survey ought to have been sent not only to the ILOs but also to the offices that work with community projects.

The CCIC survey thus was more effective because the structure of most CSOs is less complex. However, this survey excludes some representatives of civil society, giving priority to NGOs able to pay their membership to CCIC.

### *Snowball approach*

Using the initial contacts identified by the CP team and obtained from the projects databases, I started contacting people in the early stages of the research. In an informal way, by email or on the phone, the informants were given explanations about the research and were asked about their interest in participating. In some cases, initially, the participants did not consider their work to be relevant to the research. After our discussion and some time of reflection, many of these participants later saw that their work did indeed fit within the parameters of the research. Thus, these initial conversations proved to be useful, because they gave the participant time to reflect on the purpose of the research and on their work, as observed by an outsider.

In the course of collecting information outside of IDRC, the snowball method grew. Those whom I contacted gave more names of other people engaged in university-civil society collaborations. However, the names of some individuals and organizations kept coming up in the conversations. There was an impression that these are active and influential individuals, very often in the academic community, who have organized centres/university units and the activity of interest is happening around them<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> The examples are Concordia and Carleton University.

<sup>23</sup> Thus, for any given area of work or issue, most academic informants would consider only a couple of individuals as the ones actually leading university-CSO intellectual collaborations in Canada on such area or issue. Those working on community engagement in research would know Budd Hall and Peter Boothroyd in BC; those interested in co-construction of knowledge would refer me to Margie Mendel and Nancy Neamtan in Quebec; when it comes to university learning from NGO practice, the names of Bonnie Campbell at UQAM, and Pierre Beaudet at University of Ottawa kept coming up.

Finally, the potential types of collaborations were identified and the interviews with their initiators were scheduled. My trip plans did not change but on the contrary were confirmed by the information collected. The snowball method, however, continued throughout the interviews, as participants willingly shared information on other known collaborations in the field.

The majority of interviewees were the same people recommended initially by Luc Mougeot and others in the team. Most of the contact people were involved in initiatives supported by IDRC. This is not surprising: international research requires financial support and IDRC's primary interest is to support research initiatives in international development. The fact that I was an IDRC representative also might have contributed to the results of this search. The snowball method proved to be the most effective in searching for the collaborations of interest to this research. The relationship side of collaborative work constituted the body of tacit knowledge often not captured in reports.

### *Towards typology*

The exploratory stage of the project yielded a variety of collaborations. This informed my knowledge on collaborations in Canada and was useful to explain the study to the informants. At this initial stage the survey was still ongoing, the data collected did not allow me to confirm a definitive typology, as specific collaborations identified were of varying nature and intensity, and more information was necessary to visualize how they might relate one with another under possibly more robust types. The evolving methodology of the research called for more in-depth study of collaborations and personal interviews were necessary.

## **2.2. Field Trips**

As stated before, field trips were planned early in the research. The areas in Canada where the collaboration between universities and civil society is strong were confirmed by further data collection. Victoria, Nanaimo and Vancouver on the West Coast; Montréal in Québec; Halifax and Antigonish on the East Coast; and Ottawa-Gatineau area in Ontario were identified as the places to visit.

Field trips are the second step in the data collection for this project. Apart from visiting both the academics and practitioners involved in collaborations identified, I used the opportunity of being on site to meet and interview participants in the same metropolitan area that either had been recommended by key informants or by the Canadian Partnerships team. The interviews were to understand what makes working together efficient, what the enablers are and what are the benefits and challenges posed by these relationships.

### 2.2.1. Interviews

The field trips were centered around personal, semi-structured interviews with university researchers and civil society activists. Because this research has the goal to understand the collaborations primarily from the participants' perspective, I chose qualitative in-depth interviews as a method of data collection (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Open-ended responses were gathered to avoid predetermined points of view that could occur in the questionnaire of the survey. The participants had a variety of backgrounds, different interests, and work settings. They could be a representative of the homeless community, the director of a research laboratory, or an officer of a large international NGO. The goal of the interviews was to reveal the story behind the formal project report, to understand what led to the achieved results, and what was learnt in the process. Semi-structured interviews allowed for a better understanding of the enablers and drivers of collaborations and how the relationships are built. Because I was unable to observe the collaborative work of organizations over time, the in-depth interview approach was very useful.

Forty-five people were personally interviewed in British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Montréal and Ottawa and sixteen more people were interviewed by phone or by Skype.

Because of the evolving methodology, some interview questions were revised based on an analysis of the first set of interviews, and refined questions were included in later interviews. Thus, for example, the first interviewees reflected on their projects, which had discrete beginning and end as defined by the duration of financial support to them. Once I revised the question this prompted interviewees to reflect more on the relationship itself, when speaking

about collaboration. With the focus now more on relationships than on projects, the beginning and end of the collaboration became rather blurred and it became difficult to understand how these relationships had developed in the first place. I re-defined the questions accordingly in the following interviews and enquired more specifically into the nature of collaborations. Another tendency which the participants exhibited was to build their story mostly around IDRC support, as I was seen as an intern representing IDRC rather than as an independent professional.

I asked interviewees about the importance of this study and what outcomes they hoped to see. The participants were advised that further follow-up on my part was possible. They were also asked to suggest their choice of a successful practice among the activities they were doing, to encourage them to do more than just talk about all the projects they were doing in the field. This helped to create an on-going dialogue and build relationships with the interviewees, providing a space for future communication, e.g. confirming details possibly omitted during the interviews.

Logistically, it was a challenge to meet both the academic and practitioner representatives of a same collaboration during the trips. In some cases, interviews were conducted later by phone. Often the collaboration is not just a two-way street, but takes place within a larger network where the Canadian civil society representative, for instance, may not play a significant role. There were cases when the collaboration was not particularly relevant to the research; however, interesting themes and ideas came out of such interviews.

All the interviews, except one, were recorded for further analysis, with oral consent obtained beforehand.

### **2.3. Outline of the analysis**

The analysis will cover the data collected through surveys, the materials produced by the participants of the collaborations, and the information collected during the interviews.

### 2.3.1. Surveys

The surveys were arranged in two groups (universities and CSOs) using NVivo software<sup>24</sup>. The analysis of the surveys follows the sequence of questions asked in the surveys. Some data are arranged in a table and presented in numbers and percentages (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative data derived from open-ended questions are described and compared between universities and CSOs. Conclusions are drawn about the variety of types of relationships which universities and CSOs entertain. Depending on the percentage of participation, generalizations are drawn on the degree and types of relationships for Canadian universities with civil society in international development research. All information presented in this analysis originates from the two sets of survey data. Information on individual survey respondents is kept anonymous.

### 2.3.2. Interviews

The analysis of in-depth interview data began after finishing the first interview and continued as the research moved forward (Maxwell, 2005). The interviews were reviewed quickly after they were held, to capture major points that the interviewees made and to revise the questions where necessary. I continued to make notes after the interviews to help identify major ideas and categories discussed. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for processing with NVivo software. A research assistant helped in transcribing interviews and verifying the coding. Recording allows earlier interviews to be heard again while the analysis is already ongoing. Thus, more themes can be extracted from the interviews, and at the same time the questions for further interviews can be refined.

Once all the interviews were transcribed and common themes emerged around university-civil society collaborations, the analysis of data went through several steps (Foss & Waters, 2007, 146-156).

1. The transcripts were arranged in the Sources section of NVivo and organized in three groups: university participants, CSO participants and others (there were interviewees

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<sup>24</sup>NVivo is a software designed for computer-aided qualitative and quantitative analysis of data. In this research Version 0.8 of NVivo was employed for data organization, sorting, categorizing and analyzing.

from granting agencies, a think-tank and a for-profit planners' organization).

2. The data from the transcripts were 'meshed' with the corresponding data from the surveys and coded around the questions asked. The information pertinent to the structure of collaboration, drivers, obstacles, lessons learned, positive and negative experiences from all sources, was labelled accordingly and arranged in the NVivo Nodes section. The information not relevant to the questions was also coded with such labels as "curious observations", "comments about IDRC", or "irrelevant" in order to be analyzed for unexpected findings and possible directions for future research.
3. The coded categories and subcategories were verified by the research assistant in order to allow second opinion validation. Especially this was necessary for the "types of collaborations". Categories and subcategories in this node underwent significant revisions in the course of data analysis.
4. The links between the categories were established; they were arrived at by comparing different sources of information and laid the foundation for the narrative of the corresponding parts of this paper.

After the interviews were analyzed and the findings were described, the participants were asked to validate their words selected for citations. The printed and online materials produced by the participants are used to support their stories of collaborations where necessary. A few anecdotes are featured regarding particularly interesting practices; materials received from participants serve as the sources in those cases.

### **2.3.3. Researcher bias**

This research was a core activity in my internship program in 2010. A major challenge stemmed from the fact that as part of the Canadian Partnerships team my ideas, opinions, assumptions and points of view were influenced by the granting institution, especially before I had begun conducting interviews. Thus, my initial perspective may differ from those held by certain universities, CSOs and/or small grassroots organizations. Indeed, working from the granting



agency affected the questions underlying my analysis.

On the other hand, the field of research collaborations is fairly new to me. I was keenly aware of my position as a member of the CP team and the influence that this perspective had on the shape of my inquiry. I bore this in mind.

The literature review for this project is biased toward English language documents. It could benefit from a review of research published in other languages, especially the publications in French on experiences in Québec.

#### **2.3.4. Dissemination**

Following data analysis the report was presented at an IDRC brown bag presentation. With my supervisor's and colleagues' comments incorporated after the presentation, the draft was circulated among the key informants for comments. After review and corrections, the paper was edited by my supervisor and laid out for publication. The published paper will be eventually distributed among the interviewees.

### III. FINDINGS

This chapter attempts to understand the university-civil society collaborations for international development research in Canada. Who are the major players? Why do they need to collaborate here in Canada if their research interest is in the global South? What are the major drivers of these collaborations? Further, the major modalities of collaborations found as a result of data collection are presented. How do they function and what sustains them in the face of challenges?

#### 3.1. Who are the actors of collaborations?

The concepts of *academics* and *practitioners* are very inclusive. In the course of data collection, a range of actors or stakeholders was identified from the university and civil society responses. The surveys polled universities (through the International Liaison Officers, ILOs) and internationally-oriented CSOs in Canada. For the purposes of this research, civil society actors who were interviewed represented:

- community-based organizations: generally service-oriented small organizations with no research agenda, but heaving ready access to a large clientele of interest to researchers;
- smaller NGOs: generally with little structure and resources in place to do research but interested in engaging in it;
- small research NGOs with a few staff (some holding advanced degrees) and considerable engagement in research;
- large Canadian NGOs: there is structure and capacity for research, accountability mechanisms and connections with university are in place.

Academic actors were grouped into three categories:

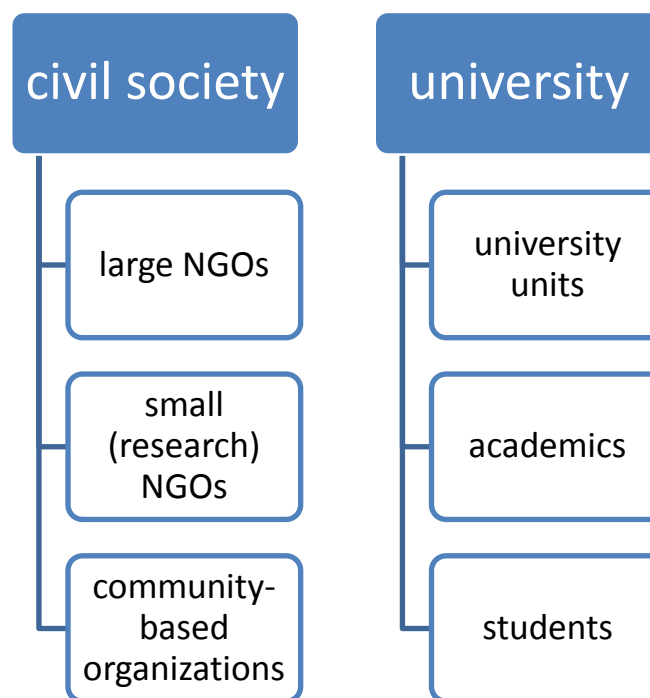
- university units: a department, a school, an office for civic engagement, or a centre for community-based research;
- individual academics: lecturers and researchers;

- students (undergraduate and graduate students).

There was a small category that can be considered as belonging to both academia and civil society. This can be a university extension department listed among CSOs on the CCIC membership list, or an NGO that provides training courses and issues certificates at the university.

Different actors identified different challenges, benefits and incentives to engage in collaborations. Depending on the actor's possibilities, the type of engagement varies. The most studied dynamic in Canada is university-community engagement on a number of issues within Canada.

**Figure 3. Potential actors in university-CSO collaborations**



Although this distinction is not consistently maintained throughout the report, it is important to keep in mind the different perspectives of the respondents. They will be referred to where necessary.

### 3.2. Why collaborate?

During the interview process, it was noted that some academic respondents would immediately understand what was being asked and give examples off the top of their head. Others had difficulty comprehending the purpose of this research and would eventually provide examples that did not feature any Canadian collaboration. Sometimes the respondents from academia did not recognize the value of including CSOs in Canada into their international development work. Thus, describing their project in the South, one respondent said that they want first to build their relationships in the country of interest, to figure out the local agenda, where the players are and what role they play, because they are helping to build capacity in that country to deal with crises faced by the people of that country. Bringing a Canadian CSO into the picture is not a priority for them.

However, there is ample evidence from the vast majority of interviewees and survey respondents of considerable benefits derived from university-CSO collaborations for international development research. The table below features benefits of collaborative work as reported by respondents representing universities and CSOs.

**Figure 4. Benefits of collaborations from universities' and from CSOs' perspectives**

CSOs appreciate	Universities appreciate
Complementary expertise and skills	
Theoretical knowledge	Practical knowledge
Research knowledge	International expertise
Methodological skills	Development expertise in the global South
Evaluation skills	Seeing research is able to inform policy
Integration of new technology	Enriched training
Reflection on their work	Learning leadership skills
Enhanced projects	
Access to funding	Help defining key questions and priorities
Application of research findings	Access to community
Clear results reports	Getting a publication out of it
Enhanced capacity of local partners	Delivery of project elements
Access to networks	
Cost-sharing	
Raising profile of organization or individual	
Students' engagement	
Access to human resources	

### 3.2.1. CSOs' perspective

CSOs most of all appreciate access to different kinds of knowledge through their collaboration with universities, be it theoretical expertise, research skills, integration of contemporary technology, or ability to evaluate their work. Most responses stressed the importance of academic expertise in research methodology. According to three sources, the demonstration, teaching and sharing of research methodology are very useful for CSOs to learn from their work. Another source said their organization benefitted from bringing academic rigour to their research.

Evaluation and assessment techniques help CSOs enhance their reflection on their work. Evaluation is often required for gaining access to funding. With the help of faculty and graduate students, monitoring and evaluation becomes feasible and practitioners enjoy learning from it. It also enhances the capacity of CSOs and their partners on the ground and it raises the profile of CSOs. This affords a greater level of impact, greater recognition, and potentially a greater ability to influence policy. One CSO noted that they themselves were able to see their own impact based on scholarly evaluation of their work. Another noted that research, advice and consultations from academics have assisted them with their strategic planning and decision-making.

Apart from knowledge and skills, CSOs working with universities can gain access to networks, which in turn can result in business development, as well as access to human resources often in short supply. Durable networks that sometimes result from collaborative work are also considered a benefit by CSOs; such networks may allow for the mentoring of interns and staff and for expanding the human resources base beyond geographical borders, by providing access to the best specialists in the field. At the same time, CSOs can share their own expertise through collaborations.

Youth engagement through collaborations with universities was cited as a benefit by three sources. Internships and work placements in CSOs provide students with an opportunity to perform research that otherwise might not have been undertaken, research that can empower

youth by enabling them to apply findings to address real problems. Funding for research is often allocated through the university. Through collaborative work with universities, CSOs explore new ways of accessing funding for their projects.

### 3.2.2. Universities' perspective

Similar benefits were noted in the responses from universities. Most asserted that collaboration with CSOs advances different aspects of academic research. For example, collaboration can increase and enhance academic researchers' knowledge about global issues, and provide complementary expertise and experience. It can expose them to different perspectives on international development. The inclusion of CSOs can benefit different aspects of academia, such as enriching students' training, increasing the international expertise of professors, strengthening their practical work in the South, and enhancing the overall internationalization

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*One of the key outcomes at the institutional level is improved research networks. The benefits from research collaboration help us define the key questions and priorities, as well as understand failures and successes that relate to development policy. They also provide contacts on the ground, for both faculty and student fieldwork. The benefits of event collaboration profile our academic program to the wider community.*

*Simon Fraser University*

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of a university by making CSOs' international knowledge available on campus.

Access to networks of experts within their region of interest and internationally is another major positive outcome, from the academics' viewpoint.

These networks lead to opportunities for collaborative research and 'on-the-ground' connections to people with whom field researchers may work. Thus, networks allow for extensive knowledge transfer and sharing of best practices.

University participants commented on the impact of collaborative work at different stages of the research project. Engagement with CSOs helps initially to define key questions and priorities in the research projects and makes these more relevant; it provides access to communities and leads to higher quality field-based projects. It also helps to understand the failures and successes of developing policy. Finally, it leaves academics better equipped for future projects.

Similar to CSOs, universities benefit from profiling their programs and projects to a wider community and from raising the profile of the university internationally.

Because the majority of collaborations involve student internships and volunteer work through CSOs, resulting benefits are abundant. These practices enhance students' education, make their learning more relevant, motivate them through the practical application of their knowledge and finally, provide direction and opportunities for their future career.

The concept of cost-sharing is viewed as both a challenge and a benefit. In one response from a

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*In cases where CCI staff have provided input to university courses and programmes, there have been no immediate benefits for CCI, although we hope in the long term that our input, along with others, will lead to students coming out of these programmes with skills and knowledge that are of value for the international development sector.*

*Canadian Crossroads International*

CSO, it was noted that if clearly negotiated from the very beginning of a project, cost-sharing can be a significant monetary incentive for working together.

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A special category of actors who benefit from these relationships are students. Both universities and CSOs testify that, as a result of collaborative work, students obtain a better understanding of cultures and issues related to development. They also learn to better appreciate Canadian values and gain a broader perspective on global issues and how interrelated the world has become. Students also gain concrete, hands-on experience and a real understanding of international development as a field of work. Several responses from CSOs revealed that they consider relationships that result in students clearly gaining from them to be beneficial, even if there were no obvious benefits to the hosting CSO itself.

### **3.3. Factors enabling collaborations**

Apart from the various benefits of collaborative work, other factors enable cross institutional relationships. Among them are: 'bridging experts', availability of spaces where the synergy of ideas is happening, and priorities of funding agencies.

### 3.3.1. Championship of 'bridging experts'

As mentioned earlier, the snowball method of collecting information revealed that the majority of university-CSO collaborations are driven by strong individuals out of their personal interests and convictions of how international development research should be done. The international development community in Canada is not large, and the work of certain champions is

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*I am an Anthropologist. I have quite a few publications in academic journals but I never had a tenured university position. After I got my degree, I decided not to apply for an academic job and instead I worked in the fishing industry for over 20 years. I worked for local fishermen organizations in Nova Scotia, then for a national organization, and then I worked at the international level for The World Forum of Fishing People; So I ended up working for fishermen all around the world as a researcher, policy writer, organizer, dishwasher, whatever.*

*John Kearney  
The Coastal Learning Communities Network*

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recognised by both academics and practitioners working around a common theme. These key people most often have many years of experience and act as a connection between the two worlds. It was a challenge to find an all-encompassing term, so I borrowed the phrase 'bridging experts' from an

interviewee working alongside such an inspirational individual.

For example, a professor of Economics who started a small NGO in Nova Scotia that is doing research and is publishing papers is referred to in university textbooks, based on his research on the ground in Nova Scotia and Bhutan. He noted in the interview: "Sometimes professors are frustrated with their work being too confined within scholarly journals and not being dispersed into the public arena." Now, through collaboration with other academics, he is interested in working with particular individuals within universities, who understand and value social engagement.

In another case, a social activist teaches a course on-campus to bring the wealth of his life experience to the classroom. This professor, who is teaching a course on community-based co-management, says that he is more connected with the community than he is with the university. "Although my connections to the university are through CURA, through adjunct positions, and through ad hoc collaboration with the professors where I do some publishing,



where I am rooted is at the community level. Not even with NGOs, but community-based organizations.” This is a particularly rare case, when a professor sacrifices tenure promotion for the passion of being part of a social movement.

At the University of Ottawa, one such ‘bridging expert’ brought his academic credentials (PhD) and 25 years of experience as an international development practitioner to participate in the creation of a new program in international development studies. The program has a civil society component at its core. The respondent noted: “Because of the way the program was structured from the beginning, because of the kind of people that came to work there, most research projects are conducted in extensive collaboration with CSOs of

different kinds.” These types of academics are generally critical of research engagements that do not involve an extensive partnership with a CSO.

Some professors rooted in academia are very keen on bringing CSOs and communities to universities, including them in research, and letting their voice be heard in class. They combine their experience, academic recognition and social activism, promoting new ways of learning despite the hierarchical structure of the university. With their enthusiasm and innovative approach they share their views with colleagues and students and in a way they create a culture of acceptance and collaboration.

For a professor at UQAM who is heading a research coalition of academics and NGOs, close research collaboration with civil society is the norm. Before her first international development project even began, she had already been very closely associated with NGOs in her research and teaching, long before the IDRC provided support to formalize such collaboration. She

### **The ‘bridging expert’ profile**

The ‘bridging experts’ share some common characteristics. They are experts in their field with decades of experience ‘on-the-ground’ and a strong reputation in research. They are known and respected in both academia and civil society. They are activists and strategic thinkers who see opportunities, mobilize resources, and drive the process from within.

The ‘bridging experts’ put a lot of energy and enthusiasm into their activity. Unless there is a structural arrangement in place, there is a risk that a collaboration will not sustain itself if the ‘bridging expert’ is removed from the picture.

received practitioners in the classroom as guest speakers and participated in the practitioners' meetings. Throughout the 1980s and the 1990s she held positions on NGO boards and participated in public consultations on "Canadian Aid Policy" through a series of roundtables. She believes that her own work was enriched through these give-and-take collaborations, even before they became more formalized.

### 3.3.2. Spaces

Spaces can also serve as enabling factors of collaboration, as they provide a place for dialogue and learning. From the data collected, networks, forums, events were identified as cognitive spaces, while special institutional arrangements (an office, a centre, a cluster of actors) were identified as structural spaces.

Most 'bridging experts', due to their extensive experience in the field, are aware of the people and institutions working in the same field. They refer to themselves as "knowledge brokers", "network weavers" and often are involved in bridging knowledge around issues of interest to their research. This is how the Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research (CCGHR) was created in 2001, to address global health issues.

There are cases where a structural/physical space is created on the premises of a university to enable collaboration with civil society. For example, the Office for Community-Based Research (OCBR) at the University of Victoria emerged as an idea from a forum of community-based researchers in 2005, and grew into "a community-university partnership which supports community engagement and research to create vibrant, sustainable and inclusive communities."<sup>25</sup>

Much evidence from the interviews points to theme-specific events as places of birth for collaborations of variable nature. These events can be conferences, workshops, symposiums, etc. Thus, OCBR organized the 2008 Community University Expo Conference in Victoria, BC, which led to the creation of the Global Alliance for Community-Engaged Research (GACER).

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<sup>25</sup> Retrieved from Office of Community-Based Research <http://web.uvic.ca/ocbr/background.html> on November 27, 2010.

GACER advocates for community-based research to meet the needs of communities both globally and locally. It comprises community-university partnerships built around a variety of themes.

Several extension programs and departments at Canadian universities offer interesting examples of collaboration with civil society. A very recent example is the Embedded Graduate Credit Certificate in Community-Based Research and Evaluation (CBRE), developed in partnership with community organizations, and it was being launched at the University of Alberta's Faculty of Extension in 2010. Another much older example is the Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier University, which began as an Extension Department in the late 1920s and later came to be known as the cradle of the Antigonish Movement.

One university in the sample was found to host an NGO on-campus. The International Ocean Institute – Canada is based at Dalhousie University in Halifax. The Institute's flagship interdisciplinary training programme is at the core of this NGO's work, providing summer training to professionals working on oceans from all over the world.

### 3.3.3. Priorities of funding agencies

Data confirmed a finding from the literature review: SSHRC, with its CURA program, has been leading in funding large community university research partnerships projects (OCBR, 2009, 19).

*CURA has provided an opportunity to consolidate these existing tendencies and bring together in an inter-institutional environment academics from different fields and with different expertise, some of whom were already collaborating in their own spaces.*

*Concordia University*

Two respondents recognised that the availability of an international component for CURA funding – targeting international community-university collaboration (ICURA) – served as a considerable motivation for them to combine their forces. Both researchers had worked with CSOs prior to applying for funding and understood the need and value of collaborative work. However, in both cases the applications were not funded, which led to collaboration being suspended for some time.

In one of the interviews, a researcher suggested that, in light of recent funding cuts for Canadian CSOs, these now have “less autonomous resources to produce research and do lobbying, and so CSOs will turn to the academic community for the research.” However, the interviewee from one CSO disagreed, saying that this situation will put CSOs in survival mode and that research may get downgraded on their list of priorities.

The factors that enable collaboration demonstrate that in order to support university-CSO collaboration, certain aspects need to be considered. Supporting individuals, providing space for dialogue and strategically directed funding are major issues for policy-makers to address.

### **3.4. Types of collaborations between Canadian universities and Canadian CSOs**

This section looks at the ways universities collaborate with civil society on international development knowledge-oriented activities in Canada. Quick Survey results provide quantitative information on the typology of collaborations suggested by CP and present other types of interactions that occur. Further, the typology of collaborations extracted both from surveys and interviews is presented.

#### **3.4.1. Quick Survey results**

The purpose of the Quick Survey was to map out existing collaborations for international development between Canadian universities and Canadian civil society and to reveal the typology of engagements across the country, specifically any type that would have been missed so far.

#### ***Universities***

The participation of the ILOs in the Quick Survey was voluntary. Of 98 ILOs at 94 Canadian universities, 23 sent back a reply. Although 24 per cent participation seems not very high, one needs to take into account that not all the universities are research institutions and not all of them have interest in international development. As well, it is possible that in some universities, ILOs may not be aware of existing examples of collaboration with CSOs, particularly

if there is no current project that is explicitly defined as being collaborative.

The ILOs were asked three questions, regarding the existence of collaborations in their universities with civil society in Canada on international development activities, the types of collaboration experienced, and the outcomes of such collaborations.

Based on IDRC corporate knowledge, the following typology of collaborations was outlined:

- University-CSO collaboration on research projects
- Commissioning of studies by CSOs to academics
- Recruitment of CSO experts by universities
- CSO input into training offered by universities
- Volunteering by academics in the global South via Canadian CSOs
- Visiting lectureships, research fellowships of CSO experts in universities
- Student study placements/internships with CSOs
- Others

In the Quick Survey, ILOs of Canadian universities were asked to select the modalities of engagement of which they were aware and to describe any modalities they might list in the category “Others”.

The low rate of participation is also probably due to the fact that the survey took place during the summer months. Of the 23 ILOs who responded, five did not identify any collaboration with Canadian civil society on international development knowledge-oriented activities, and one did not know whether there were any at that university. However, some noted that there are such collaborations with civil society in developing countries or that there are projects with Canadian civil society organizations that do not have an international component.

The other 17 ILOs answered that their universities indeed had examples of such collaborations. The majority of the answers revealed that universities boast a variety of types of collaboration.

**Figure 5. Types of collaborations by Canadian universities with Canadian CSOs**

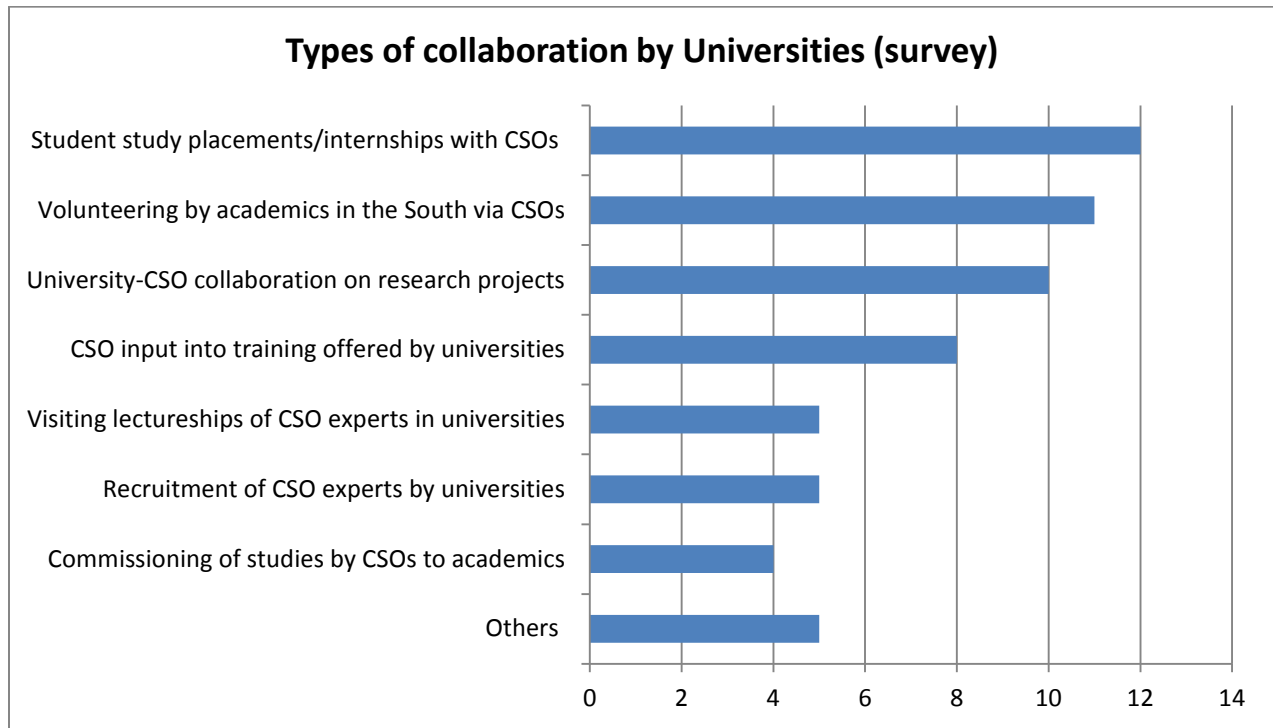


Figure 5 shows the number of responding universities having reported any given type of collaboration. On the other hand, figure 6 shows the different types of collaboration deployed by any given responding university. The universities are ordered from left to right, according to the number of types of collaborations with CSOs which they have reported. Thus, group A demonstrated few different types of collaboration, whereas group B reported three to four of the suggested types. The most engaged group C reported entertaining five and more suggested types of collaboration. This group consists of five universities.

Figure 6. Range of collaborations entertained by Canadian universities with Canadian CSOs

Typology/ILO	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
University-CSO collaboration on research projects																	
Commissioning of studies by CSOs to academics																	
Recruitment of CSO experts by universities																	
CSO input into training offered by universities																	
Volunteering by academics in the global South via Canadian CSOs																	
Visiting lectureships, research fellowships of CSO experts in universities																	
Student study placements/internships with CSOs																	
Others																	
A				B								C					

The table demonstrates that all types of collaborations suggested were found at the 17 universities that claimed collaborations with CSOs. The most common types are student study placements and internships, which is not surprising. With growing internationalization activities in Canadian universities, there is much emphasis on study and work abroad. Moreover, the management of these activities in universities is often centralized: there are study-abroad offices and students in most cases can receive credits for their international experience. Apart from international placements via Canadian CSOs, students have the opportunity to get an internship with an organization in Canada working on international development projects.

Less expected to be so popular is volunteering by academics in the global South via Canadian CSOs: 11 out of 17 universities reported this type of collaboration. University-CSO collaboration on research projects is also quite common: ten out of 17 universities have it. It is not possible to determine the nature or degree of involvement of CSOs in this type of collaboration due to the

quite general definition provided in the survey.

In eight cases, universities used CSO input in the training which they themselves offered. Commissioning of studies by CSOs to academics arose four times, while recruitment of CSOs experts by universities, visiting lectureships and fellowships of CSO experts in universities came out in the survey five times each.

Some correlations were noted in the process of analysis. In every case where commissioning of studies by CSOs to academics was reported, there are examples of collaborations on research

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*The University of Calgary, office of International Development, in partnership with academic faculties, has been involved in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of international development projects for over 20 years. In partnership with local CSOs we have been able to support and implement sustainable development across the globe within a wide range of specializations such as health, water, energy and education. Projects are designed to employ methods that value the equity of partnership, local knowledge and participation and this can only be accomplished through the involvement of CSOs. Other programs such as international internships have been benefited from our CSOs partnerships. However, some feedback has indicated that the effort required from CSOs in the training and supervision of interns, particularly for short stays, represents a challenge for organizations with already limited financial and human resources.*

*University of Calgary*

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projects as well. Given that some survey respondents specified their examples of *collaboration on research projects* as “working on a proposal”, “university providing training to CSO” or “collaboration on publication”, could it be that CSOs’ satisfactory experience with such research collaboration actually set the stage for their commissioning of studies to the university later on, or vice versa? Quite possibly, but

finer data would be needed to verify this. Similarly, in all cases where CSO input is incorporated by a university into its training, that university also does internship placements and joint research with CSOs. But here again, data available do not allow one to know which type of collaboration may lead to the other, and how often that might be the case.

Also, more categories under “others” were revealed by five participating institutions. Among these, two respondents identified participation of faculty on CSOs’ boards of directors. They also mentioned university input into CSOs’ activities, co-sponsorship and promotion of public events, as well as joint international development initiatives, including programs during the



International Development Week. The one university with the broader range of collaborations indicated its long-term involvement in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of international development projects in partnership with local CSOs.

*CSOs*

The same survey was reworded for CSOs and was sent out individually to members of the CCIC. There was a somewhat higher participation rate among CSOs: 35 responses (circa 40%) were received to the 87 surveys sent<sup>26</sup>. Fourteen CSOs reported no examples of collaboration with Canadian universities. A number of CSO respondents asked additional questions; e-mail and phone communication was notably active with this sector.

**Figure 7. Types of collaborations by Canadian CSOs with Canadian universities**

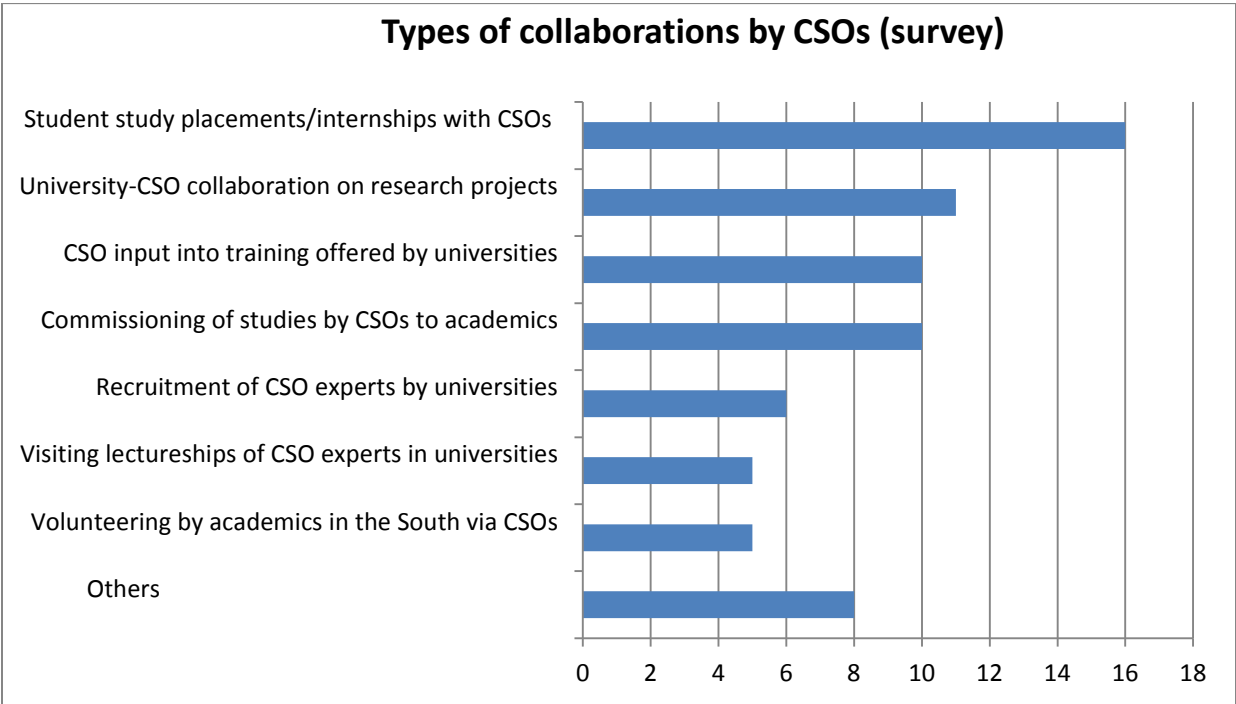


Figure 7 shows the number of responding CSOs having reported any given type of collaboration

<sup>26</sup>The Council comprises about 100 Canadian voluntary sector organizations working globally. Some of these were interviewed as part of this research.

with universities. Figure 8 below shows the different types of collaborations experienced by any given responding CSO. CSOs were ordered from left to right according to the growing range of types of collaboration reported. As in the case of universities, there are three groups of responding CSOs: those in group A reported little variation in their types of collaboration, CSOs in group B entertain three to four different types of collaboration with universities, and those in group C are more comprehensively engaged with CSOs. There are six CSOs in this group.

**Figure 8. Range of collaborations entertained by Canadian CSOs with Canadian universities**

Typology/ILO	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
University-CSO collaboration on research projects																					
Commissioning of studies by CSOs to academics																					
Recruitment of CSO experts by universities																					
CSO input into training offered by universities																					
Volunteering by academics in the global South via Canadian CSOs																					
Visiting lectureships, research fellowships of CSO experts in universities																					
Student study placements/internships with CSOs																					
Others																					
A									B							C					

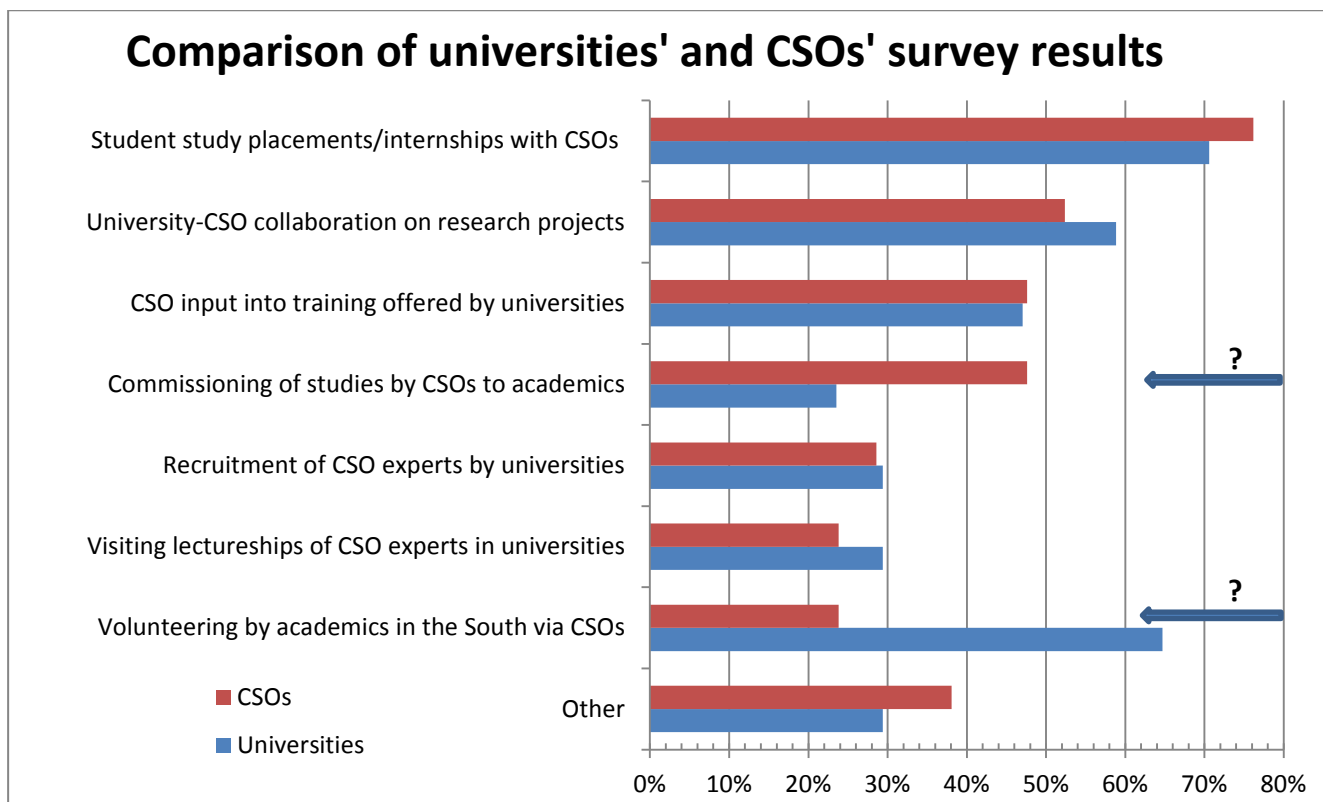
Again, all types of collaboration suggested were found in CSOs' responses. As with universities, the most common are student study placements and internships: 16 of 21 respondents are engaged in this way. Similarly, collaboration on research projects came out in 11 of 21 responses.

The correlation between commissioning of studies by CSOs to academics and collaborations on research projects is not as strong in this survey as it is in the university survey. However, visiting lectureships by CSO experts in universities (which occurs in the most engaged CSOs) tend to happen when these CSOs also practice internships. CSO experts can also provide input into study programs run by universities.

### *Comparison of University and CSO survey results*

The graph below compares university and CSO responses on a variety of collaborations which they entertain one with another.

**Figure 9. Comparison of collaborations reported by Canadian CSOs and by Canadian universities with each other**



CSOs' input into training offered by universities also yielded similar results to those produced by universities: about 47% of respondents on both sides are engaged this way. Similar responses from both categories of participants (slightly less than 30%) were received about recruitment of CSO experts by universities. The examples of visiting lectureships of CSO experts

do not differ significantly between the two categories (24 to 29%).

The two remaining categories received significantly different reactions from universities and CSOs. Commissioning of studies by CSOs to academics was reported in twice as many answers by CSOs as by universities. The difference is even more marked if we take into consideration that the responses from civil society were from mostly NGOs, whereas universities were responding about their collaboration with civil society broadly, which includes communities, diasporas, and citizens in addition to NGOs. It is difficult to say whether this gap speaks to the lack of centralized knowledge in universities on this type of activity, or whether it reflects a deeper issue of knowledge hierarchy and academia's domination in knowledge creation. The rate of participation in the survey of universities is not high enough to allow for generalized conclusions.

The number of participating universities reporting volunteering by academics in the global South via Canadian CSOs was almost three times higher than that of the participating CSOs. Keeping in mind the lower participation rate of universities, the higher awareness of CSO respondents about collaborative research activities with universities, and that many large CSOs engaged with volunteering in the global South did participate in the survey, this finding is very surprising. Does it mean that volunteering is understood differently in collaborative cases? It might be that CSOs do not consider placing an academic as volunteer in the global South to be an actual collaboration with Canadian universities whenever the CSO's own research interests are not addressed by the academic.

Among "other" types of collaboration added by CSO respondents, two referred to participation of faculty on their CSO board of directors. This includes hosting board meetings for a

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*CNIS considers all the departments of surgery and obstetrics as sources of capacity. This has allowed us to have an impact at 14 University centers in Africa as well as one in South America. We have formal and informal designations with departments of surgery and obstetrics to implement programs at departments of surgery and obstetrics in Africa. This is usually on the basis of organizational membership of Canadian departments as well as individual memberships of academics.*

*The Canadian Network for International Surgery*

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network whose work is thematically and geographically in the area of this CSO's interest. Three

respondents reported co-sponsorship, as well as promotion and organization of public events, for example, joint international development initiatives such as programs during the International Development Week.

Another example of engagement is participation as a CSO partner in research grant proposals for CURA. However, it is not identified as collaboration on a research project<sup>27</sup>. There are two examples where programs were implemented in the global South through collaboration between CSOs, thematically relevant departments and academics from Canadian universities.

One NGO reported regular consultations with academics in the global South and Canadian universities, participation in workshops and peer review processes, and the provision of legal and technical assistance by universities to CSOs. Other CSOs advised students on their research and career path, at the request of professors, or spoke at department-organized symposiums and workshops.

CSOs also mentioned engagement by a Canadian university in building networks and public dialogue on the involvement of diaspora communities in Canada in development initiatives in their countries of origin. A final example was the use of tools and techniques, developed through CSO-university collaboration, for facilitation and training purposes with Southern partners.

Overall, the responses from CSOs to the survey were quick to come in, included many examples, and sometimes posed questions on how the survey was going to be used. Two large NGOs sent their responses in two parts: after the initial invitation to participate, then after the reminder. The second response complemented the first one, providing more examples of collaborations. Many responses included extensive answers and reflection on the work done.

The results of the Canada-wide survey reveal two leading ways of university engagement with civil society. Student placements and internships are overwhelmingly popular. CSOs' input into universities' training programs is generally appreciated. Collaboration on research projects

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<sup>27</sup> There is an example from the survey, when collaboration on a research project is explained as participation of a CSO in drafting a grant proposal.

requires further examination, as this category may include a subcategory. The category “Commissioning of studies by CSOs to academics” might be relevant for both student placements, volunteering by academics with Canadian CSOs, and collaborative research projects. The examples listed by participants in the category “Others” often refer to interactions (small-scale activities) when one party uses resources of the other. These interactions can be part of collaborations or ad-hoc, event-oriented, interactions that cannot be considered as collaborations for this research.

### 3.4.2. An attempt to draw a typology

When talking about typology – the ways universities and civil society in Canada are engaging in collaborations – many respondents found it difficult to describe their activities in a linear manner. Often they were puzzled about what exactly they should refer to: a project, a program, or a relationship. Some referred to collaborations as multidimensional, complex and fluid relationships that defy description. Other respondents found it easy to list their activities: “we organize conferences, ask for advice, share our findings, etc.” One respondent called the latter “the moments of encounter”, and I understand these as a variety of interactions which may or may not grow into more consistent collaborative work. Similarly, collaborations based on long-term relationships and trust, can become institutionalized and formalized partnerships.

In order to identify typology, the information on all kinds of occurring interactions between universities and CSOs from the aggregated data was sorted into categories, using the NVivo software. The examples from both surveys and interviews were combined and sorted. The 274 references about engagements appeared to answer two questions: 1. In what collaborative activities do universities and CSOs engage? and 2. How do they do it? The “What” category reflects the types of collaboration; the “How” category reflects the catalysts for structuring these collaborations, and the events or conditions for them to flourish.

Below is the tree matrix from NVivo with the information coded. The major types are in the first order list. They were derived from the second-order types in the list. Third-order types similarly were used to define second-order types. Third-order types are those closer to the original and

more specified responses in the interviews.

## **Typology of university-CSO collaborations found in Canada**

### **NVivo-organized references**

#### **What**

##### **❖ University-CSO collaboration on research projects**

- CSO helps to inform research
  - Practitioners help academics to calibrate their research, make it relevant
- Academic helps to formulate research questions
  - Academics involved in CSO work bring relevant research questions to their students
- Funding
  - CSOs and universities provide funding for joint projects (events or field trips)
  - University as a grant administrator for CSO
  - Academic shares the existing funding for a common purpose
- Application for funding
- Writing proposal
  - Academics help to write proposals to apply for funding
- Information management and sharing
  - Surveying CS groups through CSOs to inform academic research
  - Storing and sharing data
- Developing tools and models together and for each other
- Training to use tools and models
- Monitoring research activities
- Evaluation and drawing lessons
  - Elaboration of development projects' success models by academic researchers
  - University assists a CSO to reflect on the projects' lessons learned
  - Academics help CSOs conceptualize their work (scientific expertise)
- Publication and dissemination
  - Academic involvement in the collaborative networks to accompany the practitioners, to document the projects and processes
  - CSOs ask professors to peer-review their reports
  - CSOs commission professors and graduate students to write a report or literature review
  - Academics and practitioners publish jointly
- Application of the results in other context
  - Application of local university-community project expertise to

- international development field through a CSO
    - Application of international experiences to local issues in community development
    - University and CSO involve local diasporas in International development initiatives
  - Commissioning of studies by CSOs to academics
- ❖ **(Study) placements in (by) CSOs**
  - Placements with CSOs
    - Graduate students research projects on topics relevant to CSOs
    - CSOs suggest relevant topics for student research
    - An academic spends his/her sabbatical working with a CSO.
  - Placements in the South via Canadian CSOs
    - Student involvement in CSO field work and producing research papers based on case studies
    - Formal collaboration agreements between CSOs and universities to employ PhD students in field work
    - Short-term student volunteer placements in the field
    - Volunteering by academics through Canadian CSOs that work in the global South
- ❖ **Research fellowship of CSO expert in university**
  - A practitioner spends a year at a university, as a research assistant, a lecturer or a research fellow
- ❖ **Collaboration in training programs**
  - CSO and university jointly develop the content of the university programs (Joint expertise)
  - CSO input into training offered by universities (sometimes in the South)
  - Recruitment of CSO experts to lecture
  - CSO experts mentoring students as a requirement for a university program
  - CSO experts providing pre-departure orientation for travelling to Southern countries
  - Informal introduction to the university and how it relates to the community
  - CSO provides logistical and practical expertise to researchers on the regions of interest

## How

- ❖ **Networking and dissemination**
  - Connecting with academics via information and knowledge sharing activities
  - Researchers organize events to bring together Canadian and foreign CSOs working on similar issues
  - CSOs develop informal networks with advisory bodies that include academics
  - CSOs put researchers in Canada and other parts of the world in touch electronically or through events they organize for information sharing and possible future collaboration
  - Conferences as a part of collaborations where CSOs and academia can be both the organizers and the invited speakers on the topics of mutual interest



- Creation of the academic-practitioners scientific journal where articles are shorter, there are fewer references, it is more digestible. It brings different opinions together

#### ❖ **Clusters**

- Canadian and international CSOs collaborate with a group of Canadian-international academic institutions
- Academics, CSOs and CS groups collaborate through the network of networks of practitioners, but also social movements, local development intermediaries to produce policy-oriented research and informed action
- University researchers collaborate with southern partners with the subsequent involvement of the local civil society
- University-CSOs projects bring researchers from Canada and the global South to work on issues of interest to CSOs
- University-based research partnerships structure as a connector between the academics, students and local and international CS groups

#### ❖ **Other**

- Academics as board members in CSOs
- Academics as visiting experts and scientific consultants on CSO committees and action-oriented research groups and panels
- Joint academic-CSO committees for research
- CSO jointly with the universities selects research projects to be funded by the research alliance
- CSOs advise strategic research programming through participation on scientific research committees

The original typology described by CP corresponds quite closely to the one derived from the aggregate data. In reality, there are often more than one form of collaboration that occurs in a given situation between CSOs and universities, and these forms appear to be mutually reinforcing.

**Figure 10. Types of university-CSO collaborations derived from aggregate data**

<b>Canadian Partnerships typology</b>	<b>Typology derived from aggregate data</b>
University-CSO collaboration on research projects	University-CSO collaboration on research projects
Commissioning of studies by CSOs to academics	Collaboration in training programs
Recruitment of CSO experts by universities	
CSO input into training offered by universities	
Visiting lectureships, research fellowships of CSO experts in universities	Research fellowship of CSO experts in university
Volunteering by academics in the global South via Canadian CSOs	Placements in/by CSOs
Student study placements/internships with CSOs	

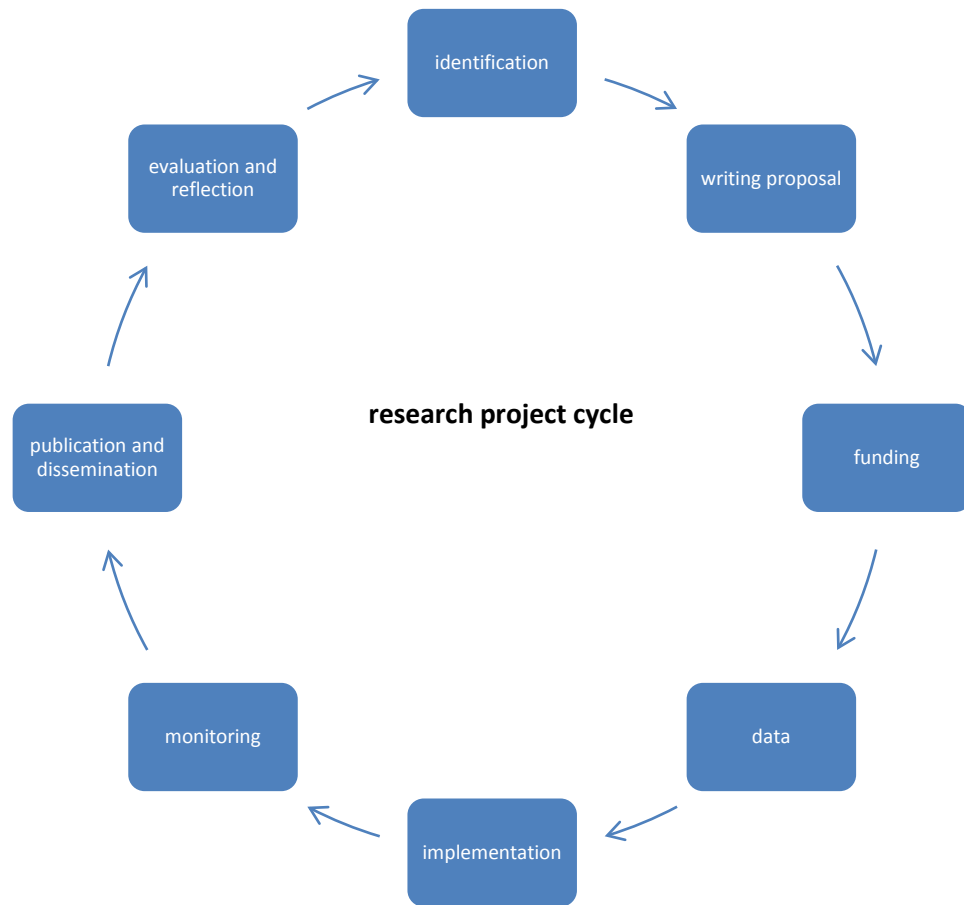
Thus, figure 10 shows that commissioning of studies by CSOs to academics may occur as part of research collaboration as well as in a form of a study/research placement by a CSO. Similarly, universities can recruit a CSO expert as a part of their research project collaboration, or it can be for training purposes. This typology is not finalized and requires more thorough investigation and description.

The three major collaborative structural organizations – collaborations around networks, multi-institutional clusters and being on each institution's boards – can be quite powerful, as they reflect institutional engagement. A lot of interactions are facilitated by these arrangements, and, according to the data collected, they are quite common in Canada. Moreover, cluster collaborations are often related to engagements in research projects and they were thoroughly addressed in the recent literature on Canadian research collaborations (OCBR, 2009; Gall et al., 2009). There is no evidence that one or another structural arrangement leads to a particular type of collaboration. The next sections describe the four major types of university-civil society collaboration found in this study.

### **Type 1. University – CSO collaboration on research project**

This type is very inclusive as there are many activities within a research project. The interactions found in this category may occur at any given stage of the research project cycle, as schematized in Figure 11 and further illustrated in the text.

**Figure 11. Possible stages of research project cycle.**



*Identification:* A small CSO in Nova Scotia commissioned university doctoral students to do a

*The focus of the project came out of the questions posed to the NGOs as to what are the conceptual issues they were dealing with when they were implementing their projects.*  
UQAM

survey of recent literature to inform research projects initiated by this CSO. This is a rare example. A number of participants (including academics) said that the research question should either be informed by the everyday work of CSOs or emerge from mutual discussions between academics and practitioners. They reiterated the crucial importance for real issues to inform the identification of the research question(s).

Collaboration for this initial stage in research programs was mentioned in relation to other types of collaboration. *E.g. for placements: to think together on the real issue informed by the needs of the CSO, or communities they work with, etc...*

There were more comments on how this needs to be done, but not many examples of real projects with a bottom-up approach to informing research and formulating a research question.

*Writing proposal:* On two occasions academics helped CSOs to develop a proposal. In two examples of cluster collaborations (ICURAs) on research proposals written by academic participants, civil society participants were involved in the process through discussing the idea together and providing feedback. There was a recent example where researchers from a university and a CSO developed the proposal together.

*Funding:* For collaborations that are happening around research (as opposed to events), universities have predominant access to funding. There were several examples, when academics shared some of their funding, especially so with small CSOs. The academic in charge of an ICURA project on youth resilience in stressful environments was approached by a First Nation community going through a spate of teen suicides. The community wanted this issue to be researched. Funding permitting, the ICURA team included the community and engaged them in participatory research (as a component of the bigger research project). In this way the community was connected with other communities that deal with the issue of teen suicides nationally and globally.

A small research-oriented CSO that was the lead in a project and the prime recipient of funding had to draw on academic expertise for some aspects of its project. The university was included as a formal partner and benefitted from some funding. In other examples organizations saw the opportunity for funding collaborative activities and they approached each other to participate.

*Use of data:* Academics use CSOs to access and collect data. In their turn, CSOs interested in research and publication can benefit from university's ethics procedures. The data can be collected, arranged in a database, and shared by both parties. Usually it is the university that has the capacity to store the data at a central place.

*Implementation:* This stage can take different forms, whether this is through developing a training module and then applying it in an international context, through developing tools to analyse specific social and cultural indicators of well-being, or through creating links between communities for international dialogue. Each example here can be considered as a type of collaboration. However, collaborating in this core stage of a research project was found to be a rare occurrence, because major structural differences and diverse institutional cultures come in play.

*Monitoring:* The Social Analysis Systems (SAS) methodology was initiated at Carleton University in order to bring scientific rigour and conceptual clarity to participatory research. The initiative provides access to an integrated collection of practical tools and strategies for collaborative inquiry, planning and evaluation. A number of CSOs in Canada and around the world are now using SAS for their projects.

*Evaluation and reflection:* Academics help CSOs to draw lessons from their projects, to document best cases and worst cases in order to strategize how best to inform policy, or to design future grant applications. Smaller CSOs without a system of accountability in place can benefit from collaboration with academic partners by receiving a detailed report on their (CSOs') activities with statistical analysis and recommendations. Thus, a social service organization working with youth at-risk in Nova Scotia hopes to learn about its own work through its participation in an international collaborative project. According to an academic interviewee, "The Humanitarian Coalition of NGOs (Oxfam, Save the Children, CARE) asked the university unit to get involved in the evaluation and the analysis of their projects, and also participate in organizing various discussions to help them to improve the quality of their work".

*Publication and dissemination:* CSOs realize the importance of documenting their practices and communicating their findings through publications. A small NGO in Nova Scotia shares its draft with academic experts for them to review. As a result, they can publish in certain journals and their work is widely cited in university textbooks. More commonly CSOs commission graduate students to document their practices or collect case studies.

There was a desire expressed by a small CSO researcher to “start their own practitioners’ journal with the overall purpose of elevating practitioners’ scholarship in its legitimacy, in its scientific validity, and its credibility for a cause.” Another group of researchers on food security implemented this and started a journal as a space of debate between academics and practitioners. Finally there are some examples where academics and practitioners have produced joint publications. In the vast majority of cases such academics are those described as ‘bridging experts’ earlier.

## Type 2. Study placements

The data from the interviews confirmed that this modality is an overwhelmingly popular way for universities and CSOs to collaborate. This type of activity is sometimes institutionalised in the form of a long-standing partnership. It includes internships, volunteer placements, work placements where students and (in some cases) academics are “positioned” to learn from the work of CSOs in Canada or on the ground in the global South. They in turn make their competences and skills available to assist CSOs. Because of this core principle I did not distinguish between paid and unpaid placements. However, it is worth noting that the placements in this category are those structured strictly around research and knowledge-

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*Having come from the NGO world and been involved in creating North-South two-way/cooperative partnerships, I found the structure of the academic involvement in community of international development was often limited and often not based on reciprocity: academics could go into the communities without building partnerships but rather to study and gather material. There is a strong movement in communities and First Nations here in Canada and around the world to expect more. There can be real benefits on both sides if the support mechanisms for reciprocal partnerships are in place.*

*University of Victoria*

*Do not impose on NGO an intern to do whatever, but the task should come from specific need of this NGO.*

*Université de Montréal*

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creation activities. (i.e. they are not about building a well in a village).

Most examples of such placements reveal that the arrangement predominantly used is quite conventional: university students are interested in the work of a particular organization, an academic is concerned with issues

of a certain community, or a university wants to formalize its internships and makes sure there is a consistent flow of students working with CSOs to “apply their knowledge to local social

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*The GRIOT initiative allows Oxfam-Québec to offer the university and researchers the field of research and the existing expertise of practitioners in development. For the organization it allows opportunities for ideas, innovation and theories of change testing, and for receiving feedback that will result in organizational capacity building and expertise enhancement.*

*Oxfam-Québec*

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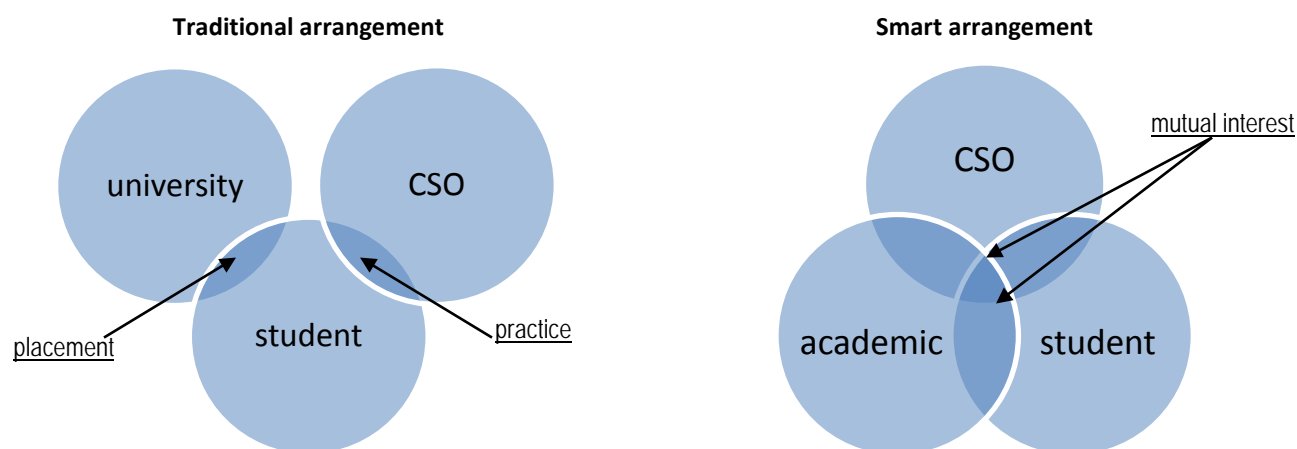
issues” (from an interview with a university academic).

When such ‘knowledge application’ becomes a major goal, this approach is very much criticized by the ‘bridging experts’ as not being productive, thus bringing little value. Several CSO respondents agreed that there are limited positive outcomes for CSOs when those placements are mainly used

as research platforms. They pointed at significant challenges which CSOs encounter with this type of collaboration. For intern-hosting CSOs this requires them to set aside time and resources to mentor interns; on the other hand, community-based organizations are often used as research subjects but do not even receive the report, once the research is completed.

However, there were examples of “smart” placements, when all parties benefit from such an engagement. In each case the emphasis was on identifying mutual interests at the very initial stage of arranging the placement.

**Figure 12. Arrangements for study/research placements**



In one such example the arrangement for the research placement between Oxfam-Québec and

three universities in Québec was taken a step further and became a formalized agreement. GRIOT – Groupe de recherche pour l’innovation, l’organisation et le transfert d’Oxfam-Québec – is expected to move a pre-existing relationship to a new level, whereby the NGO’s own research needs will directly steer the objectives of the research internship of interested students.

The purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding between Oxfam-Québec and individual universities, besides formalizing the partnership, is to protect the university in terms of author rights, commercial benefit, ownership of the results or commercial results. It also gives guarantee to Oxfam-Québec that research placements will truly contribute to the work of the organization. Academics and the NGO are currently holding discussions to identify possible areas of research. The respondents from GRIOT agree: “this is a main challenge to have such a common understanding about what the research will cover, how it will be conducted and how the results of the research will be transferred and applied to the practices of the Oxfam-Québec as a learning organization.”

### Type 3. Collaboration in training programs

*We want theory and practice to intersect at the crossroads.  
Certificate of International Cooperation  
University of Montréal*

Many examples of university – CSO collaborations focused on developing and implementing training programs. This can be for pre-departure training of volunteers who are going to participate in a project on the ground. A university and a small NGO offer together a university extension program in the global South (it can also be a training module for practitioners or community in the global South).

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*What training is provided to community members? It is not only the university members who need to know about how to work with communities, but also communities need guidance on how to relate to universities. The language is different and the structure is different. It is like working in two completely different cultures. I worked on a training program for community members so they could have information and understand where to go in order to access people within the university system. This training allowed them to engage with faculty, be an active member of a research team and to work closely with students.*

*Shawn G’Hearn, Director  
Global Health Office, Dalhousie University*

Relationships are not always equally balanced in this modality. The group of academics tends to design the program, then they invite



practitioners to teach or to study. However, in cases where this worked, the organising academics are ‘bridging experts’ who had long relationships and built trust with CSOs. Noteworthy is that the actors involved in this type of collaboration are either a university unit that has CSOs’ interests on its agenda, or a group of cluster-collaborators. Hosting units may be: an extension department, an institute for community development, or an office of community-engaged research. In one case, an NGO developed the training program by itself, then asked academics to teach in it. The program committee can be composed of a group of researchers and practitioners.

The training programs vary in types. Most are summer school programs; some ongoing programs issue degrees and certificates. There are structured and non-structured programs. An interesting case is one where community organizations are brought on campus by a special extension unit to learn about the ways of the university, about the research agendas, about the

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*The NGOs want to see what universities are doing, to influence the research, but also to get some theoretical base; and the university wants to have links with the civil society, as it is the purpose of the university to reveal the knowledge coming from those who already have the experience.*

*Certificate of International Cooperation, University of Montréal*

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*This initiative is interesting. It helps to bring students to the ground and bring professionals to the level of reflection.*

*Dominique Caouette*

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culture of academia and to reflect on their own work and needs.

The undergraduate program “Certificate of International Cooperation” at the University of Montréal was created and produced with the help of eight Québec CSOs directly

involved in international cooperation. It was the idea of the university to involve them. Specific individual practitioners were approached to help academics in designing and managing this program. From the beginning it was a partnership between the university and the CSOs, formalized through a jointly signed contract. Many instructors in the program are CSO practitioners with either a Master’s or a PhD degree.

Other interactions and modalities are entertained under the Certificate program: participants take part in the colloquium, publish together, and collaborate on the internships and student

placements. The idea behind this program is to create a hands-on educational basis. The director says: “Cooperation is how you apply development”, thus pointing that a cooperative effort should be at the core of development strategies.

The major challenges identified for this type in general are: the inflexible structure of the university, language barriers (outcome of difference in institutional cultures), and time required to produce high-quality papers. Even so, the programs try to cope with such challenges as they forge ahead.

#### Type 4. Research fellowships for CSO actors

*It is common for universities to send students as interns to NGOs; it is quite uncommon to take people from NGOs and put them in the universities. After so many years of work this type of exchange could also be quite fruitful.*

*A former executive director of Inter Pares*

*Those with more education and less experience could get some hands-on experience, and those with less formal education could get in to the academic world, to reflect on their experience and link it to other areas of research. This part often doesn't get attention because it is normally assumed that if you have been working for quite a while for an NGO, it seems that you've got the education you need.*

*A former executive director of Inter Pares*

Although there was only one example of such modality, it stands out as what can be considered an innovative way of engagement. The director of a CSO spent one year researching and teaching at a

university. This happened because the inviting professor had some funding available and saw the opportunity.

The relationships started at a conference where they both were presenters. At one point, the professor asked if the practitioner knew any people in Africa who could be interested in a research project that she was doing on globalization. After giving her some contacts, the interviewee said that she herself was interested. So, the professor invited her to come to the university as her research assistant. She was granted the status of an adjunct professor so that she could also lecture and be a teaching assistant.

It was a very beneficial experience both for the practitioner and her CSO, as when she returned

to the CSO, this knowledge helped strengthen the research dimension of its work. The experience was also shared with other CSOs. At the university, this practitioner had researched the political economy of aid and how it affects international solidarity as pursued by CSOs and development agencies.

The main challenge that this respondent identified was the unavailability of funds to support similar initiatives. The ripple-effect from one person, who had time to reflect on the work of CSOs and to document it in a publication, was significant. The respondent suggests this should be practiced more regularly; and conference discussions should be held at the end of such fellowships to disseminate its learning more widely to CSOs.

### 3.5. Summary of challenges

*This research can be refreshing for professors: university people need to start working horizontally. Knowledge is implicitly hierarchic, and we need to de-construct expertise. The longer you work at the university, the stronger you believe in yourself being an expert. We need to get out as often as possible from a pure university context.*

*Dominique Caouette  
Université de Montréal*

Some of the challenges were already mentioned in previous sections of this report. The aggregate responses from surveys and interviews are summarized in the following table.

**Figure 13. Challenges of collaborations, both from universities' and from CSOs' perspectives**

<b>CSOs' challenges</b>	<b>Universities' challenges</b>
Differences in institutional culture and structure	
Building lasting relationships beyond the limitation of the project	
Cost-sharing and uneven funding flows	
Different goals, incentives, motivations, interests and needs; struggle to find convergence	
Time taken for research versus its implementation	Long time needed build organizational relationships
Lack of knowledge of practical tools and exposure to management	Lack of professionalism with newer CSOs
Administration of collaborative work	
Practical implementation of results	
Academic language of communicating the results	
	The way funding agencies are working

As underlined in the literature on inter-sectorial partnerships, the differences in institutional structure and culture often present an underlying obstacle to successful collaborations. The participants talked about a hierarchy of knowledge, where the learning process is predominantly top-down, about the red-tape in academia, the scarcity of time and resources in CSOs. Unsurprisingly, limited funding appeared to be another major challenge. Both CSOs and some universities pointed out the tension that arises when sharing the costs of a project. This challenge is more felt by smaller CSOs and community organizations than by large internationally-oriented NGOs. With recent public funding redirections this may become a challenge for the latter as well.

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*Isn't it nice that professors can take a year of sabbatical to spend it and to learn on the ground? The level of salaries and basic livelihood is the number one contradiction between the support for university and for community-based research. The livelihood of a university researcher is not an issue: they are getting income regardless of the availability of grants. In the community-based organization, both North and South the livelihood of a researcher is an issue. That changes the whole dynamic of how they relate to one another. That is something that I find is not adequately addressed in funding. How to build collaboration if you are not on a level playing field: one person not only has a guaranteed salary, but a nice livelihood, and other people are struggling to maintain a salary at all.*

*John Kearney  
The Coastal Learning Communities Network*

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Some confirmed that challenges also include different mindsets, different goals and visions for organizations. With regards to the institutional culture issue, most criticism was directed to universities. However, some CSO participants pointed to some obstacles created by the ways they themselves sometimes function. For example, when it comes to academic research for evaluating and improving projects or programs run by them, CSOs are sometimes not very welcoming of academic research. Academics bring this critical view in collaborative work.

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*The international development NGO community is not always very welcoming of critique, because they are fighting for their survival. A lot of the academic research tends to be critical and sometime this can be perceived as undermining the institutions or organizations, NGOs are trying to keep their position strong. This might also create a tension depending on how much people really want to look critically at things and at the work they are doing.*

*Dominique Caouette, Associate Professor, Département de science politique  
Coordonateur du REDTAC - Souveraineté alimentaire, Université de Montréal*

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Academics noticed that it is often difficult to capture information on what individual academics are doing in international development research, for different reasons. Some recognised that the field is competitive and in some cases researchers tend to keep their contacts and ideas to themselves. The other reason is the lack of a centralized effort to coordinate collaborative activities on campus. Thus, one ILO was aware that there were academics at the university who

volunteered abroad through a Canadian international development CSO, but could not obtain any concrete information about it.

One NGO noted the fluidity of administrative staff and students at universities, which does not allow for building lasting relationships. Meanwhile, a representative from a university complained that the mobility of CSO staff is higher than at the university and this puts relationships at risk. Most Canadian universities that request professors to report on three aspects of their work – teaching, research and community work – do not emphasize the latter aspect so much as the former two. Academics engaged in collaborations lamented the lack of recognition of such efforts by their university.

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*Who are the top scholars? Those who have the most publications in the best journals. This is the primary way of rating how great a researcher you are. I can fill up the room with community briefs, policy papers, different studies which were part of my work for community-based organizations and that would count for practically zero. Recognition is not the same. If you want to keep your job working for a fishermen's organization as a researcher you want to make sure, that your research will help them not only to continue fishing but to do a little bit better. A university professor collaborating with me wants to make sure that he will get a publication out of it. That can create a difficulty in collaboration when you are driven by different kinds of pressure about what you need to produce.*

*John Kearney  
The Coastal Learning Communities Network*

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The time factor was also confirmed as a major barrier. Some of the critical functions of many CSOs are fundraising and advocacy: very little time is left for research. The timeframe for academic research is much longer than that for implementing a practical project. The time factor is also identified as a challenge, when it comes to time needed for building trust. This factor is more relevant for smaller CSOs and community organizations that do not necessarily have the capacity, but do have an interest in research.

Both communities lamented the lack of knowledge and expertise of their counterparts, which sometimes interferes with successful collaboration. In both cases, this identifies the deeper problem of a lack of exposure to each other's work.

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*The research discourse around service users and clients often has an underpinning of youth as subjects. Research can talk about young people as samples rather than people with real lives. It sometimes seems that the more you are involved in what are considered adequate research methods, the farther you move from people's lives. The research becomes disconnected. Community agencies are often not as involved in the research as we could be, because we have not found the way to connect. I know a professor at a local university whose work is on risk factors for youth. He often asks me do you know professor so-and-so because they are doing research in your field. My response is often that I've never heard of him. Yet they are doing research in fields that could inform our work! I wonder if it's because the audience of their publications are academics – it's not us. It is very interesting – what's not really working there?*

*Community-based agency working with youth*

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As one can see from Figure 13 on page 68, the majority of challenges are mutual for both academics and practitioners involved in research collaborations. Failure to link research to concrete results and to informing policy is one of the critiques causing a disconnect in the relationships. This disconnect is aggravated by the inaccessibility of academic language for an effective dissemination of research results.

Community representatives as well as some NGO and university respondents expressed concern that, in a vast majority of cases, university people (be they students or academics) come to CSOs with preconceived ideas, with predetermined hypotheses, and pre-set agendas, and “get nowhere because they get so stuck on what they want to talk about.” (CCIC)

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*Community-based research is talked a lot about by the university. However, there is much imbalance between the communities of the street people and the intellectual machine of the university and a lot needs to change for the people to see some real results from these collaborations. The indigenous people experience the same imbalance with academic world. It is more about how to change ‘that’ culture of academia and to develop relationships and trust that would help guiding real research for the people.*

*United We Can*

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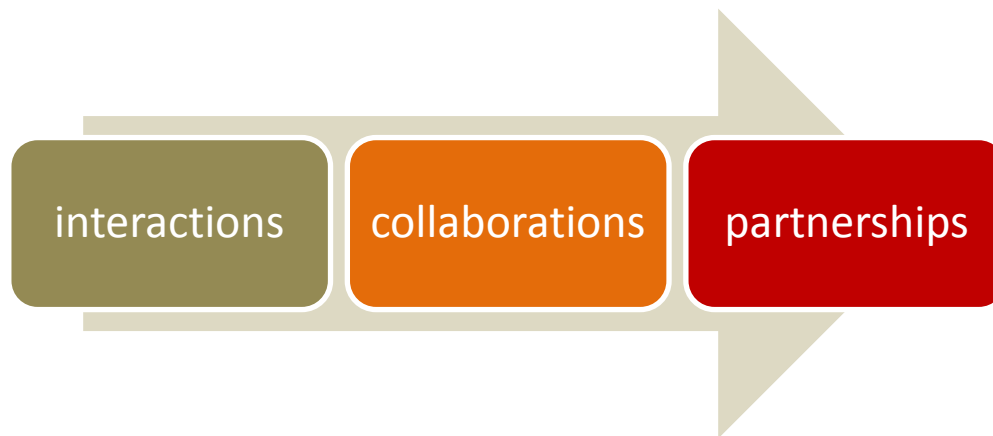
Participants also pointed out the challenge of converging interests and finding ways to achieve different goals. When this challenge is hard to overcome, they are opposed to formalizing collaboration and prefer occasional interactions in familiar ways.

The challenges can be divided into structural and ongoing. Structural challenges are relevant to the way institutions are organized and will take a long time to change; however, ongoing challenges refer to practices and can be addressed, thus contributing to institutional change

needed for confronting more structural challenges. Those engaged in collaborations found some ways to overcome some of the challenges and it is important to capitalize on their experience.

### 3.6. How are relationships structured?

Figure 14. Three stages of relationships identified



Based on the data from interviews the three stages that relationships between universities and CSOs can go through were identified. This is not a stepwise model through which all relationships will or should evolve. Also, the model does not imply either that the quality of research necessarily improves from one stage to the next. It was noticed however that Stage 2 relationships (collaborations) tend to be less sustainable than Stage 3 counterparts (partnerships) and more so than Stage 1 relationships (interactions). Also, partnerships demonstrate the highest level of engagement or commitment by parties involved.

#### *Stage 1- Interactions*

A majority of relationships between universities and civil society in Canada can be identified as interactions. These are ad-hoc, spontaneous contacts, when one party seeks the assistance of the other, but not necessarily vice versa. The actors who benefitted tend to go back and repeat the exercise within another project. Through these interactions mutual trust can be built over time. Both sides realize potential benefits and there seems to be a growing number of such interactions over time. At this stage interactions are more likely to happen around research



projects, at different stages of the research. Based on the data collected, most initial meetings happen at the dissemination stage of a project cycle: during conferences, symposiums workshops etc.

### *Stage 2 - Collaborations*

Sometimes, under certain conditions these interactions may grow into collaborations (of particular interest to this research). These collaborations vary from loosely structured to more formalized, but they are always characterised by reciprocity and mutual interest. The goals often stay different and at this stage the university and the CSO learn to use each other's strengths in a complementary fashion. A very important characteristic of this stage is flexibility. A majority of respondents mostly enjoy flexibility when the relationships are mature enough to get formalized. At this point some realize the benefits of simply staying in this collaborative stage, given the flexibility which it allows for creating space for innovation.

### *Stage 3 - Partnerships*

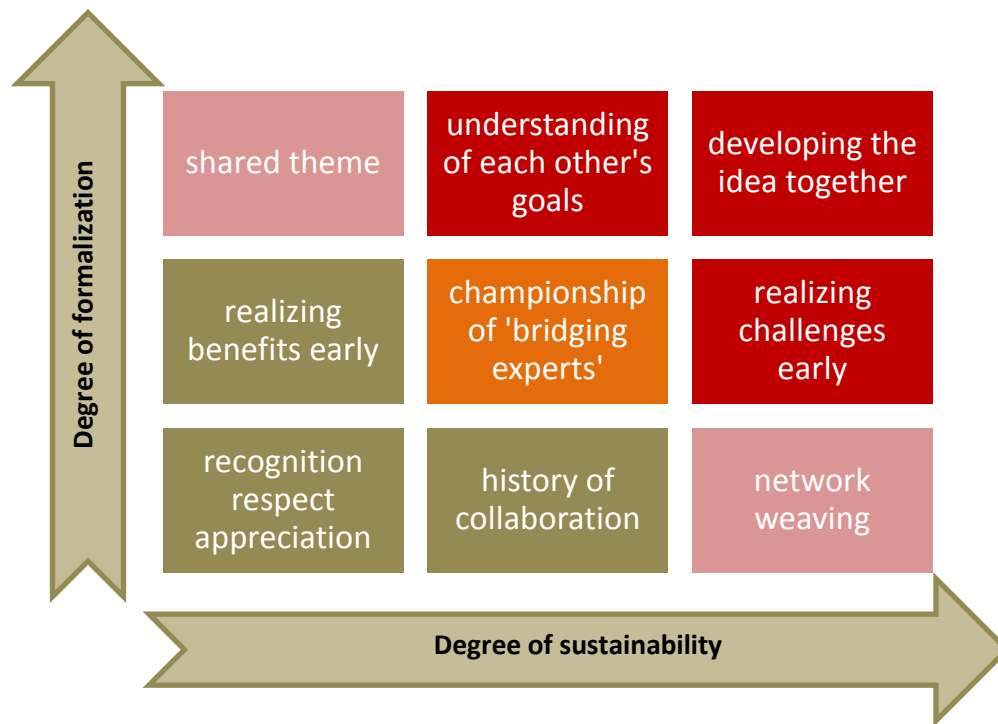
If and when trust is fully established and a range of mutual complementarities is recognised, this can lead the university and the CSO to strategize together. There is clear vision of everybody's roles and benefits, and assurance in funding. The collaboration can be taken a step further to an institutionalized and formalized partnership. For civil society this is likely to happen mostly between well-established larger NGOs or groupings of CSOs and universities.

## **3.7. What sustains collaborations in the face of challenges?**

*Keeping flexibility of the relationships because they are based on the moments of encounters*  
Dominique Caouette  
Université de Montréal

I avoided addressing the question of success, realizing that its meaning is not necessarily the same for universities, CSOs and funding agencies. Instead I decided to address the depth of engagement and its sustainability. Relying largely on the responses from 'bridging experts' as those with extensive experience, major factors that make engagements more involved and relationships more sustainable were identified. The following graph presents the relative importance factors that contribute to more formalized and sustainable collaborations.

**Figure 15. Relative importance of factors that contribute to deeper-engaged and more sustainable collaborative work.**



All factors are identified as important. However, experts specifically underlined those on the lower-left to upper-right diagonal as crucial for progression towards deeper and more sustainable collaborations. Again this is not a rigid prescription, but one that is drawn from reflections on particular cases referred to in this paper.

Literature often points to mutual goals as one important factor for successful collaborations. Yet, it was found that often in the collaborative arrangements, it is not a shared goal but a commitment to find a fit for different goals pursued by different partners that is essential for effective collaboration.

Another important factor of success in the literature is trust. In the examples of this research, trust is developed through interactions, open discussion of goals and possible challenges and understanding how organizations operate. In other words, trust can be a sign of stable collaboration, or in some cases an outcome of effective relationships.

This model of factors contributing to more deeply engaged and more sustainable collaborations can benefit from more detailed investigation on different types of arrangements: e.g.

universities collaborating with large international NGOs versus individual academics collaborating for research with community organizations.

In conclusion I would like to summarise various findings uncovered in this research.

## IV. LESSONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Findings from this research and its process lead me to draw some lessons from the research process and to make suggestions about ways to strengthen and encourage university-CSO collaborations on international development research in Canada.

### *Lessons*

Methodologically, the expert knowledge on Canadian CSO-university collaborations available in-house (IDRC/CP) has proven to be the most accessible source of background information to move this project forward. For the most part, the research results confirmed the views of CP staff, while adding some level of specificity.

Secondly, the snowball method proved to be the most effective to identify the collaborations of interest to this research. The relationship side of collaborative work constituted the body of tacit knowledge which is often not well captured in project reports.

The findings confirm that collaborative work between universities and CSOs in Canada on research-related activities for international development is being pursued in a range of different ways, given its benefits and despite challenges recognised by both communities. It is in fact a modus operandi for many professionals and organizations in both communities. It has penetrated the structure of Canadian universities and some consider that it is essential in the field of international development research. Thus, university-CSO collaborations are here to stay and institutions face the task of making these effective.

The range of different types of collaboration in which any given university or any given CSO is involved varies greatly across the country and, even on the basis of small samples, the study was able to clearly identify three groups of organizations in each community, ranging from those involved with very few to others engaged in many types of collaboration. Further research should help explain these differences, as well as processes by which a particular organization may move from one category to another. Furthermore, the interviews which focused on the relationships and their evolution, beyond discrete activities, greatly assisted in

developing a gradation of relationships (from interactions, to collaborations to partnerships). Case studies in the future should help to elicit the processes by which a given university and CSO decide to move (or not) from one stage to the next in their relationship.

The factors that enable effective collaborations identified from the interviews have demonstrated that in order to support university-CSO collaborations, certain essential aspects need to be considered: supporting individuals, providing space for dialogue and strategically directed funding are major issues for policy-makers to address.

Below are some suggestions for the stake-holders involved, such as funding agencies, universities and civil society organizations.

### *Suggestions*

The role of funding agencies in nurturing research collaborations is absolutely critical. As sources of support, they have the capacity to affect the national dynamics of the entire international development research community.

Firstly, building a stronger capacity to monitor the collaborative activity nationally is absolutely essential, as locating and funding critical initiatives becomes more and more necessary. It is understood that the process of creating such capacity (building databases, using mapping capabilities, regularly surveying actors, etc.) is somewhat time and resource consuming. However, the benefits of having such capability in place cannot be overestimated. On a similar note, to encourage innovative approaches by funding a collection of case-study collaborations and by developing a library of good practices may prove to be quite important elements of a learning strategy for all parties involved. One such series of examples may be derived from the ICURA program, by encouraging the accessible dissemination of lessons, that is, not only the reports on the completed projects but also the reflections on partnership building.

In the course of the research both academics and practitioners expressed concern about the amount of paperwork and expertise needed for grant application. It appears that many opportunities for collaboration never materialize because of the administrative hurdles and the

lack of institutional and human resources on part of potential partners. Therefore, we suggest that grant application and reporting requirements be adjusted for collaborative initiatives where small CSOs and community-organizations wish to work with universities for research-related activities.

To further encourage the practitioner-academic interaction, reciprocity and knowledge exchange, annual fellowships could be offered for a small number of CSO activists to enter academia and participate in teaching and research for a period of time. Academics playing hosts to such placements should benefit from the experience of practitioners, with the opportunity to adjust their research and to make it more relevant; for practitioners, such placements would afford them an opportunity for self-reflection and knowledge sharing.

The factors that enable collaborations such as interactive spaces, in which actors from various environments come together for a dynamic exchange, **certainly deserve further and continuous** support. The already existing examples of organizational and institutional partnerships (e.g.: GACER) that were created in the wake of specific events (conferences, forums or roundtables); confirm the importance of strategic planning for such events (purpose, participants, program, timing) and the value of small grants to make these possible.

Support for the establishment of a practitioners' research journal may prove useful in providing spaces for new collaborative co-creation of knowledge, informed debate and discussion between practitioners and academics. As nearly every interviewee has touched on the issue of different types of knowledge, as well as on the institutional gaps between universities and CSOs in research-oriented activities, such a journal could assist with reconciling the different types of knowledge, fostering creative exchange, and inspiring greater collaboration between the two communities. The existing Canadian Journal of Development Studies or other existing electronic publications can play this role and feature articles by practitioners.

One of the areas of growing interest in Canada is university research partnerships with indigenous communities. This gives Canada a comparative advantage in taking a strong international role in the area of indigenous knowledge. Studying emerging linkages between

community-university partnerships of indigenous scholarship in Canada and similar partnerships led by indigenous scholars and organisations in the global South is a suggested avenue for future research.

The last quote from an ICURA project participant in conclusion to this report is an illustration of how sharing knowledge and experiences, “walking the walk” together, brings relationships to trespass cultural and institutional boundaries, and unplanned mutual learning experiences may lead to promising collaborations.

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*During an international exchange earlier this year, we assembled a mixed group of researchers to hike Wah-nah-juss Mountain of the Meares Island Tribal Park, near Tofino British Columbia. Beginning the expedition as associates, stronger relationships began to form around Nuu-chah-nulth knowledge-patterns, shared as we made our way up the ancient cedar rain forest trail. Upon achieving the summit, we were blessed by an intimate encounter with one juvenile and five adult Bald Eagles who slowly circled our group on the small rock out cropping; creating a unique space for the discourse that followed on Ecological Governance, Economic Diversity and Ecosystem Security."*

*Eli Enns, Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Administrator,  
Tribal Parks Program Co-Founder*

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